

KEVIN SMITH

batman: cacophony



WALT FLANAGAN
SANDRA HOPE







batman::cacophony

KEVIN SMITH

writer

WALT FLANAGAN

penciller

SANDRA HOPE

inker

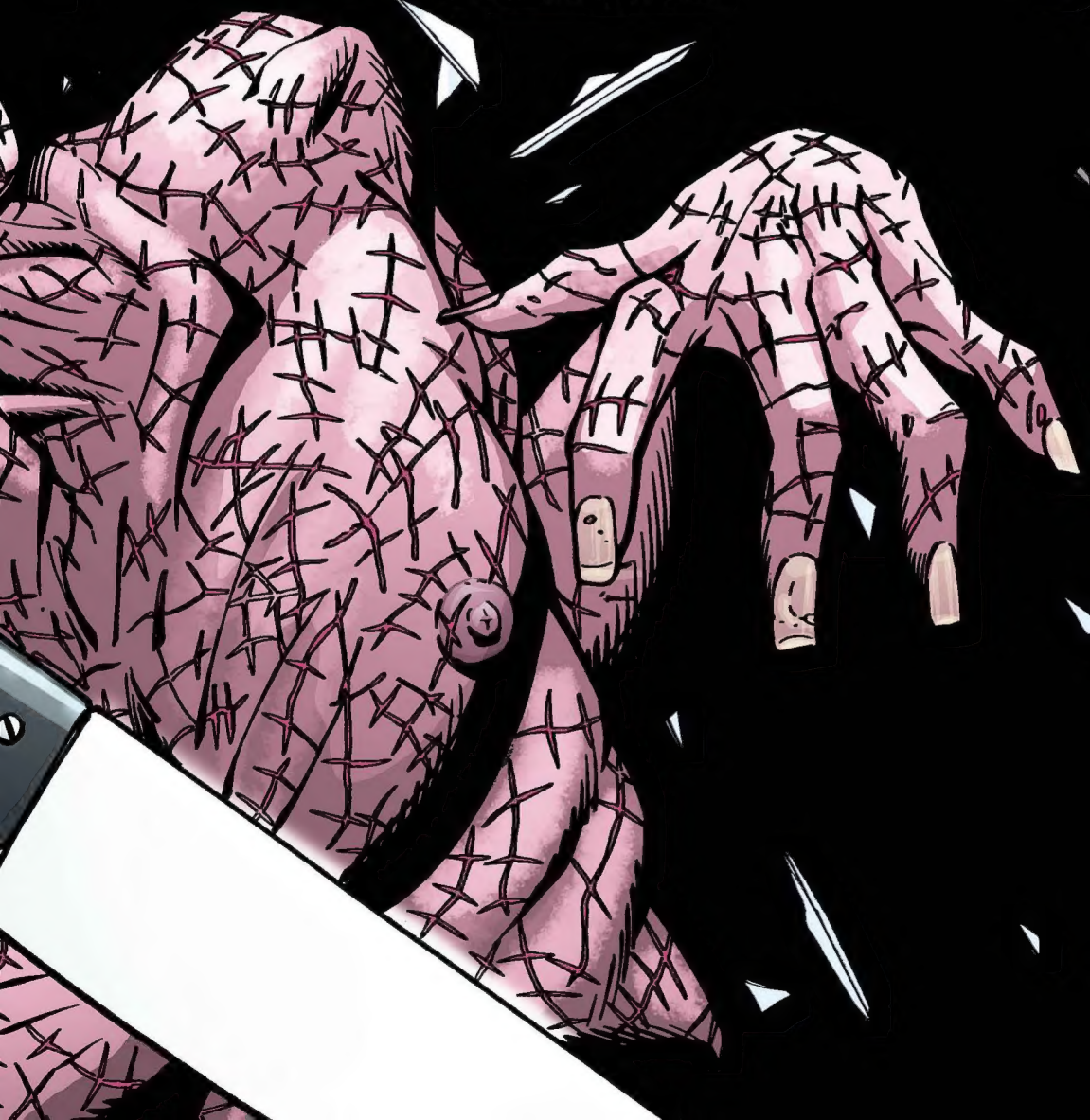
GUY MAJOR

colorist

JARED K. FLETCHER

letterer

BATMAN *created by Bob Kane*





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BATMAN: CACOPHONY

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introduction by KEVIN SMITH

To address the elephant in the room, yes — Walt got the job because he's my friend. And, yes — it's unseemly and unprofessional to trade in such naked nepotism; so much so that a base-coach from the *other* team insinuated that I bullied DC editorial into giving my guy the job.

I mean, sure — that's *one* way to look at it. Or you can view it through *this* prism: without Walt, not only would "Cacophony" not exist, I'd have likely never read any comics beyond *Sad Sack* or *Hot Stuff the L'il Devil*.

Walt Flanagan was my comics guru. Circa 1989, we worked together at the Highlands Recreation Center for a year, during which time he'd loan me copies of *THE DARK KNIGHT RETURNS*, *WATCHMEN* and *Mage*.

It was an age of wonders. We'd spend weekends going to Fred Greenberg's NY comic book shows at the Penn Hotel, cherry picking the wall books and discount boxes 'til dusk — at which point, we two suburbanite lads would scamper back home to Monmouth County, where nobody's ever been mugged. When there wasn't a weekend show to hit, we'd drive from one end of Jersey to the other with a phone book, tracking down hole-in-the-wall hobby shops, hoping to find still-racked, first printings of *THE KILLING JOKE* (re: phonebook — mind you, this is in the pre-internet, pre-GPS, nearly-crustacean era).

Walt Flanagan always liked to draw. He had a penchant for drawing Metal-influenced zombies.

During those many hours on toll roads, we'd talk about the story arcs and specific issues we loved, and — like all comic fans — how we would've improved plot points or dialogue with our fan-

boy attention to detail and love of continuity. And after all that unwitting training, a decade or so later, I was actually writing for those very DC characters I'd rhapsodized about with Walt while trekking up and down the state, looking for new wall books at old rack prices.

No slouch himself, Walt had teamed up with his cinematic and real world best-y, Bryan Johnson, to create both *Karney* and *War of the Undead* for IDW. The most involvement I had with either mini was an intro I did for the *Karney* trade.

So there we were: two comics-lovin' dudes from the Jersey 'burbs who both fulfilled dreams of making funny books.

But we'd never done it *together* (y'know, a comic book; not "whoopee").

And that's what I was thinking when I saw the "Dark Knight" billboard.

Oh, I was always a Batman fan: from a childhood of afternoons spent watching Adam West "Batman" reruns when school let out, to Tim Burton's groundbreaking film in '89, to everything Marshall Rogers and Frank Miller had ever done that featured the cowed crusader. But the teaser trailers for Nolan's flick? The billboards? It reignited my Bat-thusiasm. I fell in love all over again.

Confession time: I haven't read weekly new books in over five years. I fell behind in my reading, then fell even further behind, then stopped reading altogether. Walt would keep me updated as to what was happening in the various plotlines of the many titles I used to regularly read. I'd long since lost the desire to write

comics — largely because I'd become *persona non grata* in the comics community, due to my incessant lateness. But looking up at that billboard? I became very interested in Batman again. And the more I stared at the billboard, the more I "saw" Walt's name.

Here was one of my closest friends in the world — the guy responsible for my four-color enthusiasm — drawing comics. Here was me, wanting to write some comics. And neither of us were getting any younger.

So I called Dan DiDio, who I'd met many years prior, and asked him if I could write a Batman mini and have my longtime friend draw it. Dan understood immediately that my passion for the project was being fueled by the desire to bring my comics interest full circle: create a miniseries *with* my comics-brother-from-another-mother handling the art chores.

And man, was it fun for us — not to mention a dream come true.

Fun and educational, actually. I banged out the first two scripts in a week, but it wasn't until issue one streeted that I did a second draft — all thanks to a CACOPHONY review in which a critic pointed out that some of the dialogue I'd given Batman didn't sound natural in the least when spoken aloud. I gave it a test run and the blogger was absolutely correct: I'd gotten too showy with the word balloons. So I re-drafted all the dialogue for the next two issues, scraping away the excess verbiage, and boiling each sentiment down to the same Bat-time (same Bat-channel).

On the art front, Walt would draw a rough of the page. If necessary, I'd ask for tweaks, then he'd take it to full pencils. And over the course of three issues, both of us got better at creating a comic book. The writing improved from issue one to issue three, and the art followed suit (indeed, peep out the "Fountainhead" reading sequences in issue one and three; they look like they were drawn by two different artists entirely).

So for those who'd snark about me getting my friend a job: you've got it all wrong. Scrape away everything else, and you'll see that *I'M* the friend who benefited from nepotism; because if it weren't for Walt Flanagan, I wouldn't have this gig. Walt is Batman himself — and me? I've always been nothing more than a fat-and-flabby, immature, over-eager Robin.

But to be fair, once we got the approval from Dan and DC, I started thinking about how I'd written Batman into a bit of my GREEN ARROW run, yet said in many an interview, "I don't wanna write a Batman story ever; it's fun to use him as a supporting player instead." What a stupid thing to say. Why limit yourself when it came to the single most interesting superhero ever created? Why not try to write the best Batman story you could?

No — that's *not* CACOPHONY.

By series' end, I realized it wasn't the best Batman story I could write; nor was it Walt's finest hour. By the time we were finished, I saw CACOPHONY for what it was: a dress rehearsal for the best Batman story I could write/ Walt could draw. It was a warm-up. Quentin Tarantino (yeah, I'm dropping names) once told me that he wanted to do another martial arts flick after the *Kill Bill* films because by the time those flicks were done, he'd learned how to do it. His logic was "Now I've got all this expertise in the field. Why not put it to use immediately?"

So the three issues of CACOPHONY gave birth to a twelve-issue maxi-series that Walt and I are working on now, for release this fall. Entitled BATMAN: THE WIDENING GYRE, it is, for sure, the *best* Batman story either of us can do.

Meantime, 'til that hits the stands? Please enjoy the *second-best* Batman story me and Walt could tell.

Kevin Smith

6/22/09



batman::cacophony #1 cover by ADAM KUBERT





THE ARKHAM ASYLUM FOR
THE CRIMINALLY INSANE.


FOLLOWING THE RECENT
NATIONWIDE ECONOMIC CRASH,
AS A COST-CUTTING MEASURE,
THE BOARD OPTED TO
DISCONTINUE SECURITY GUARDS
AT THE FRONT GATE.




THE RATIONALE WAS THAT
NOBODY EVER WANTS TO
BREAK IN TO ARKHAM.



THE BOARD DIVVIED UP THE SIXTY
THOUSAND DOLLAR SAVINGS AMONG
THEMSELVES IN YEAR-END BONUSES.




LONGTIME FRONT GATE
GUARDS SAM JENNINGS
AND ROY KELLY WERE
FORCED TO LOOK FOR
WORK IN A JOB MARKET
THAT HAS LITTLE USE FOR
EMPLOYEES OVER FIFTY.



WHEN HIS
UNEMPLOYMENT
BENEFITS RAN OUT,
SAM FILED FOR
GOVERNMENT
ASSISTANCE.

HIS WIFE--NOW
FORCED TO USE
FOOD STAMPS AT
THEIR NEIGHBORHOOD
SUPERMARKET--
REGULARLY BERATES
SAM FOR BRINGING
HER SO LOW.



ROY, HOWEVER--ALWAYS
THE MORE INDUSTRIOUS
OF THE TWO--TOOK OUT
AN AD IN THE GOTHAM
GAZETTE'S PERSONALS
SECTION THAT RAN EVERY
DAY FOR TWO MONTHS.



"FORMER ARKHAM
SECURITY GUARD SEEKS
EMPLOYMENT OR OTHER"
THE LISTING READ.

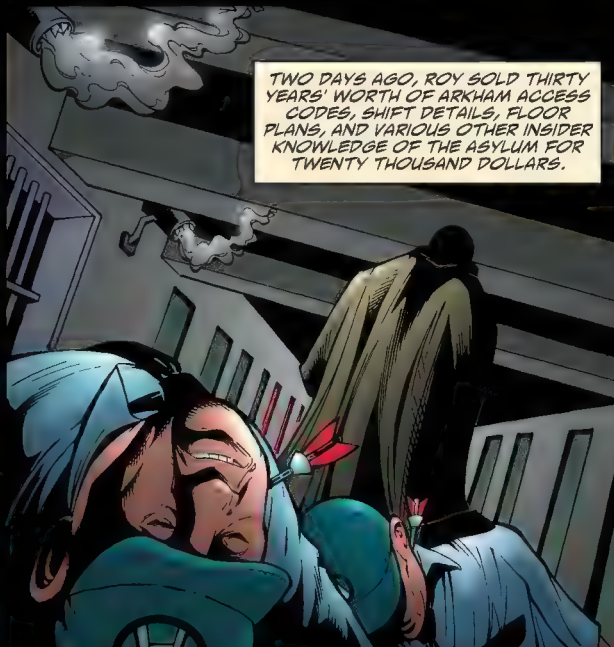
"THIRTY YEARS' EXPERIENCE
IN THE WORLD'S MOST
DANGEROUS AND SECURE
PENAL INSTITUTION. INQUIRIES
CONTACT BOX 1145"

PAF!

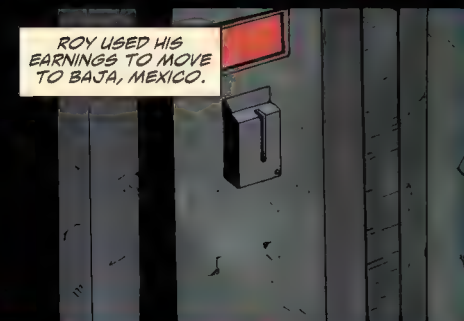
LAST WEEK, HE FINALLY GOT THE CALL HE'D HOPED WOULD EVENTUALLY COME.



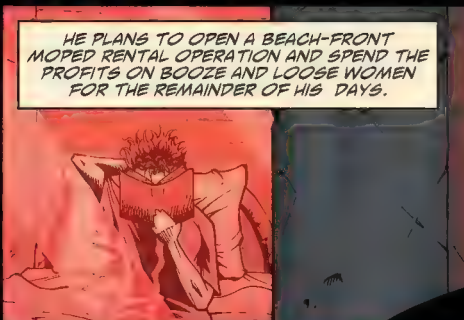
TWO DAYS AGO, ROY SOLD THIRTY YEARS' WORTH OF ARKHAM ACCESS CODES, SHIFT DETAILS, FLOOR PLANS, AND VARIOUS OTHER INSIDER KNOWLEDGE OF THE ASYLUM FOR TWENTY THOUSAND DOLLARS.



ROY USED HIS EARNINGS TO MOVE TO BAJA, MEXICO.



HE PLANS TO OPEN A BEACH-FRONT MOPED RENTAL OPERATION AND SPEND THE PROFITS ON BOOZE AND LOOSE WOMEN FOR THE REMAINDER OF HIS DAYS.





JOKER.

IF I'D KNOWN YOU WERE COMING, I'D'VE DONE MY HAIR. OR AT LEAST PUT ON MY MERKIN.

I'VE GOT A GREEN ONE, NATCH. THE CURTAINS HAVE TO MATCH THE DRAPES, AS THEY SAY.

HEH.

THEY'VE GOT YOU LOCKED UP GOOD AND TIGHT, HUH?

THIS IS THE SAME STUFF THEY MADE THE POPE-MOBILE OUT OF, I'M TOLD--ONLY THICKER.

I MISS THE BARS. BUT THROW ONE MEASLY PIECE OF POO AT A GUARD, AND SUDDENLY IT'S ALL BULLET-PROOF GLASS FOR OUR HERO.

COURSE, THE POO DID HAVE RAZOR BLADES IN IT, BUT STILL.

TO WHAT DO I OWE THE PLEASURE OF THIS LATE-NIGHT POP-IN?

I'M
HERE TO
KILL YOU,
LAUGHING-
BOY.

HUH.

WELL,
THAT'LL SAVE
ME FROM HAVING TO
FINISH THIS KNEE-
SLAPPER.

THAT'S ONE
OF MY
FAVORITES.

I DON'T
DOUBT IT.

IT'S NOTHING
PERSONAL. GOT A CALL
TWO WEEKS AGO FROM A
PARENT WHOSE KID YOU
KILLED, LOOKING FOR
SOME PAYBACK.

AT FIRST,
I WAS ALL SET
TO TURN HIM DOWN,
CONSIDERING YOU'RE A
PRETTY HARD MARK
TO REACH.

BUT I'VE
GOT A SOFT SPOT
FOR THE PARENTS OF
MURDERED CHILDREN--
BEING ONE M'SELF--SO I
TOOK THE COMMISSION.
EVEN GAVE HIM A
DISCOUNT RATE.

SO I GUESS
IT IS KINDA
PERSONAL.

LOOK, FLOYD--
I HATE TO BE THAT
GUY AND ALL, BUT YOU
MIND SHARING THE
REASON YOU WANNA
DO ME DIRTY?

YOU'RE THE PROVERBIAL
WHORE-WITH-A-HEART-
O'-GOLD, FLOYD.

YOU DO KNOW
THAT I RARELY KILL
CHILDREN, RIGHT?

THIS WASN'T
A KID-KID. HIGH
SCHOOLER. GOT
TWEAKED OUT ON
"CHUCKLES" AND THREW
HIMSELF OFF THE
CAFETERIA ROOF
DURING LUNCH.

KID WENT
FROM BROWN-
BAGGIN' IT TO
BODY-BAGGIN'
IT, HUH? NICE.

BUT, PRAY
TELL: WHAT'S
"CHUCKLES"?

THEY DON'T
LET YOU READ
THE PAPERS
IN HERE?

JUST THE
COMICS SECTION.
EXCEPT "FAMILY CIRCUS."
THEY TAKE THAT STRIP
OUT 'CAUSE IT TENDS TO
RILE UP SOME OF THE
MORE...TOUCHY
INMATES.

THE
ONES THAT
LIKE TO TOUCH
CHILDREN, I
MEAN.

YOU
REMEMBER
MAXIE ZEUS?

WAS THAT LIKE "MARY WORTH"?
'CAUSE I NEVER READ THAT
SOAP-OPERA-Y CRAP.

"FOR BETTER
OR FOR WORSE"
GRINDS MY
GEARS, TOO.

S'NOT A COMIC.
MAXIE ZEUS--THE
CRIME LORD.

WAIT--YOU MEAN
THE LAMEST BOSS
IN THE GOTHAM
UNDERWORLD?

THAT'S
THE ONE.

WELL, HE FOUND
AN OLD CACHE OF
YOUR JOKER VENOM
LAST TIME YOU GOT PUT
AWAY AND STARTED
CUTTING IT WITH
ECSTASY.

APPARENTLY,
IF YOU DILUTE THE
DOSAGE, YOUR POISON
GIVES A GREAT HIGH.

WHAT?!

THEY CALL IT "CHUCKLES"--ON ACCOUNT
OF IT'S A GIGGLY HIGH, TOO, APPARENTLY.
PEOPLE LOVE A DRUG THAT MAKES
'EM STUPID.

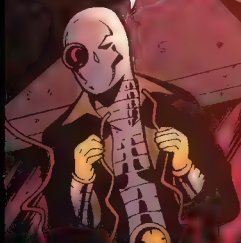
STUFF CAUGHT ON IN THE CLUBS
FIRST, THEN SPREAD OUT INTO THE
SUBURBS. SIDE EFFECTS ARE PRETTY NASTY,
AS YOU MIGHT IMAGINE: LOCKJAW, PARANOIA,
PSYCHOSIS. BUT WHEN'VE DANGEROUS
SIDE EFFECTS EVER STOPPED FOLKS
FROM DOING DRUGS?

IT'S BECOME PRETTY
POPULAR--AT LEAST IN GOTHAM.
LAST MONTH, TIME CALLED IT "THE
WORST DRUG EPIDEMIC SINCE
CRACK IN THE LATE '80s."



NOW THAT IS CLASSIC JOKER
RIGHT THERE: A GUY'S MAKING A
FORTUNE OFF SOME POISON
YOU CREATED...

AND WHAT'S
BUGGING YOU
THE MOST IS THAT
PEOPLE'RE GETTING
AN UNHEALTHY KICK
FROM YOUR POISON
NOW, INSTEAD OF
DROPPING DEAD
INSTANTLY.



IF IT'S ANY CONSOLATION, SOME
FOLKS ARE OVERPOSING ON
"CHUCKLES" TOO. SO, Y'KNOW--
YOU'RE STILL KINDA RACKING
UP THE BODY COUNT.

I'LL
KILL
HIM!

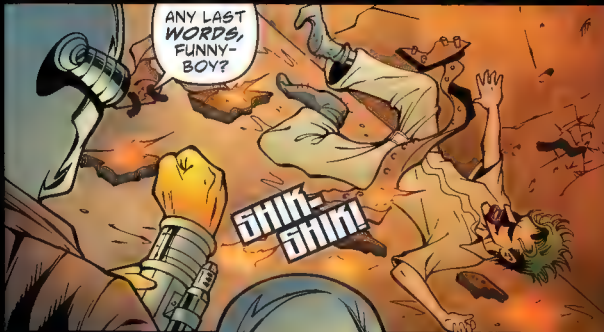
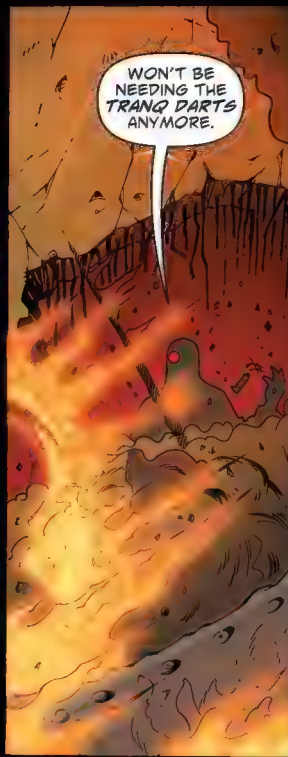
HA.
YOU ARE A
COMEDIAN.

DO ME
A SOLID AND
STEP AWAY FROM
THE GLASS, PLEASE.
I WANT YOU IN ONE
PIECE WHEN I EMPTY
TWO CLIPS IN YOUR HEAD.



OH...

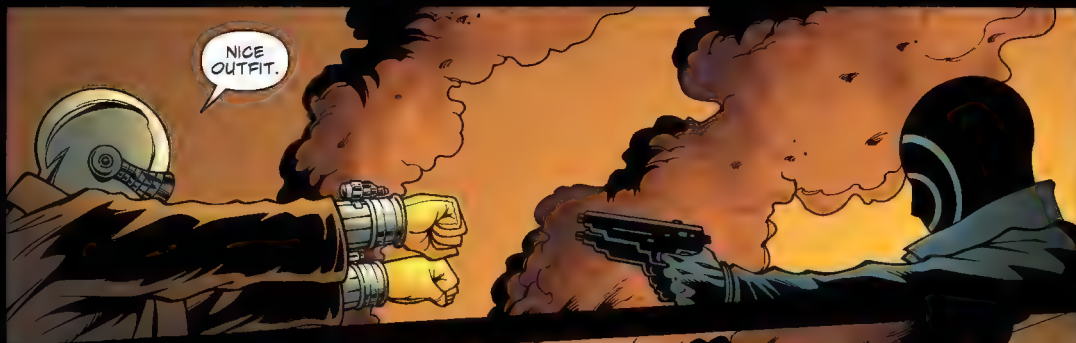








FWUSHHHH.



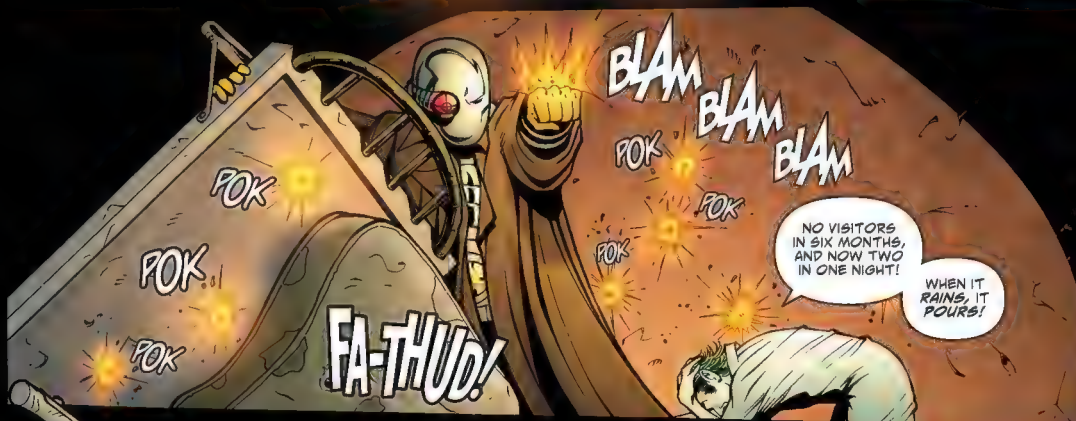
NICE
OUTFIT.



BLAM
BLAM

BLAM
BLAM

BLAM.
BLAM.
BLAM.
BLAM.



FOK

FOK

FOK

FA-THUD!

BLAM
BLAM
BLAM

FOK

FOK

FOK

NO VISITORS
IN SIX MONTHS,
AND NOW TWO
IN ONE NIGHT!

WHEN IT
RAINS, IT
POURS!

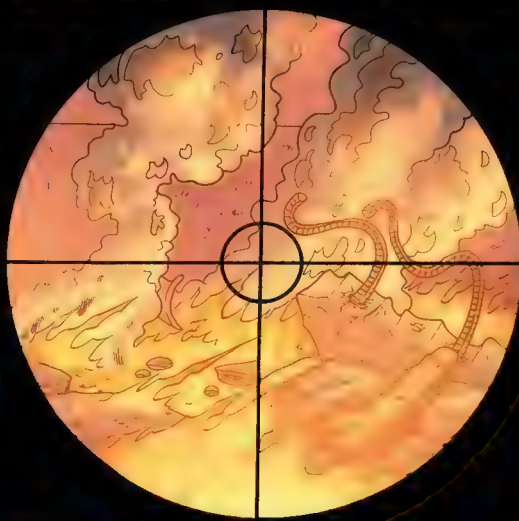
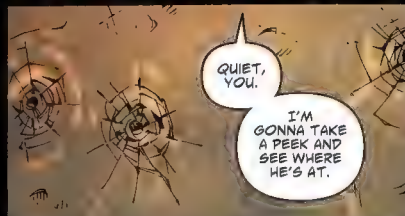
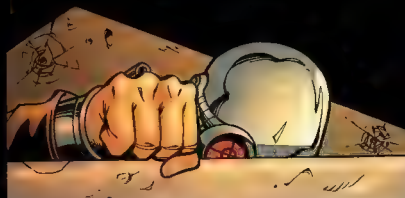


FA-THUD.



C'MERE,
CLARABELL...

SULK~









LOOK, CAN YOU SHUT UP FOR A SECOND? I CAN'T THINK WITH ALL YOUR CHATTER.

HA.



TOUGH CROWD.

OKAY, I'LL PLAY ALONG, HARPO: WHAT'S IN THE...



OH MY...



UM...IS THIS FOR ME?

OH--I GET IT NOW: YOU'VE GOT ONE OF THOSE CLOWN FETISHES.



WELL, ALL RIGHT. BUT LISTEN, SLAPPY--I BOTTOM FROM THE TOP, OKAY?



JUST DO ME A FAVOR
AND DON'T EVER
TELL TETCH.

SHHHHHH...

THAT
MIDGET'S BEEN
TRYING TO GET
ME TO DO THIS
FOR YEARS NOW,
AND I TOLD HIM
I DON'T SWING
THAT...



HUH?

HEY!
WHERE'D
YOU GO?!



SEDUCED AND
ABANDONED.



"I FEEL SO
DIRTY..."

SO FILTHY SICK
AND DIRTY...

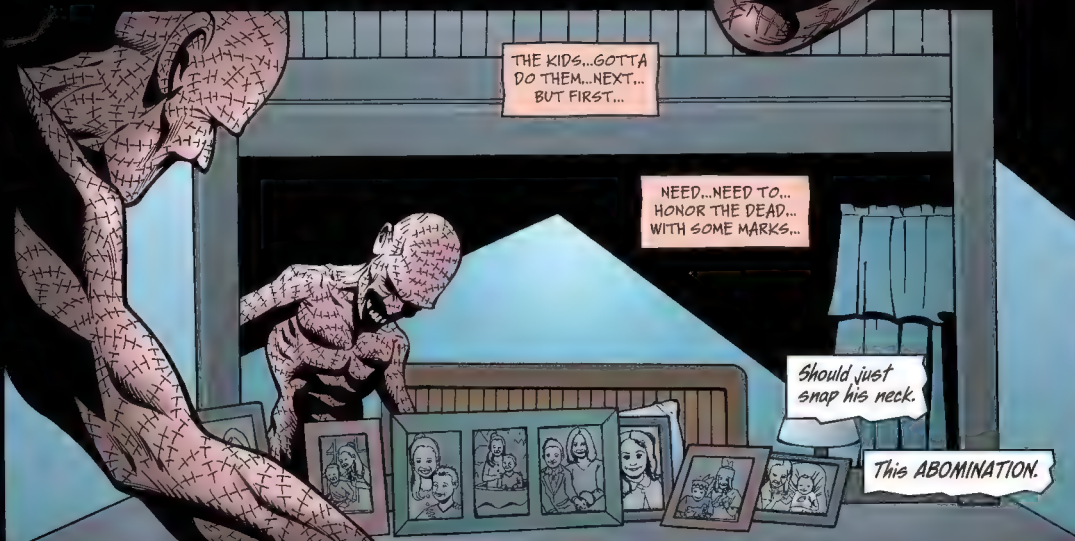
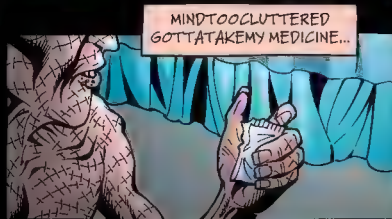


PURITY FROM RELEASE
OF BAN ALL VICES THEY
SHOULD BE THANKING ME
NOT JUDGING ME WITH
THEIR CLERGY EYES...

CAN'T CLEANSE THEIR
SINS! WITHOUT THE
GLASSES ANYMORE THE
GLASSES SO I CAN SEE
MYSELF REFLECTED IN
THEIR ARTIFICIAL GAZES...

BEGGING ME TO
BAPTISE THEM
ANEW IN THE
LITURGY OF THE KNIFE
AND BLOOD...





Instead, I crash
Zeas's unholy
briss.

Baruch haba,
SCUMBAG.

SKKRRKKS#

AAAAHHHHH!





Of all the lunatics
I spend my life
putting down...

SWISHHHH!

This one I
hate the most.



I AM CHARON,
THE FERRYMAN!
I AM MICHAEL, THE
ARCHANGEL! I AM
SHIVA, THE GOD
OF DEATH! I AM
SAMHAIN!



SHUT
THE HELL
UP...



KRAK



KE-RAASH



Too late,
yet again.

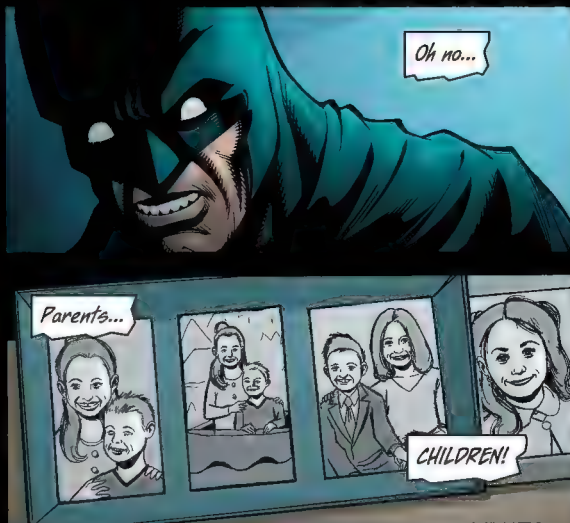
I offer a silent apology
to the victims I failed
to protect from
another madman.



No--not just
VICTIMS. PEOPLE.

Two people who somehow
found one another in an
otherwise horrible world.

Like my
PARENTS.



Oh no...

Parents...

CHILDREN!



No more marks
tonight, Zsasz.

I swear.



FLY AWAY,
BATMAN!

YOU HEAR
ME?! GET OUTA
HERE OR I SEND
THESE KIDS TO
MEET THEIR
PARENTS!

MOMMY!



I'M JUST FIBBING
TO HIM, KID. I'VE
GOTTA KILL YOU
AND YOUR SISTER.
ONLY 'CAUSE I
LOVE YOU SO
MUCH.

THIS'LL
ONLY STING
FOR A
SECOND...



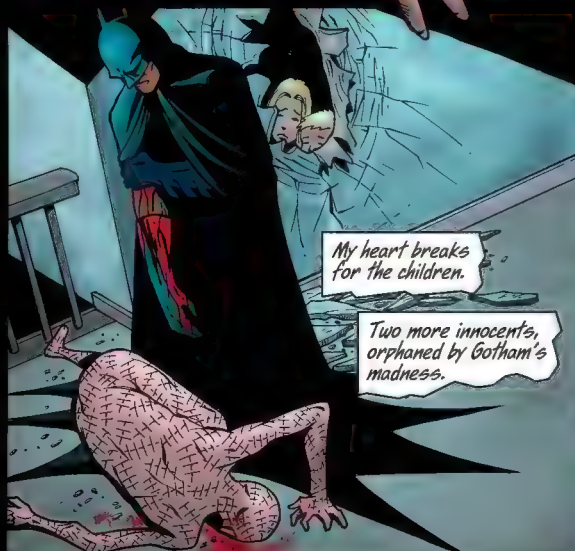
EEEEK!

KRUNCH



HYUCK!

AHHHH!



The monster can't hurt you now.

ZSASZ IS RESTRAINED ON THE SECOND FLOOR. HE'LL REQUIRE MEDICAL ATTENTION.

SEE THAT HE DOESN'T GET IT FOR AT LEAST AN HOUR.

THE COMMISSIONER'S LOOKING FOR YOU, SIR.

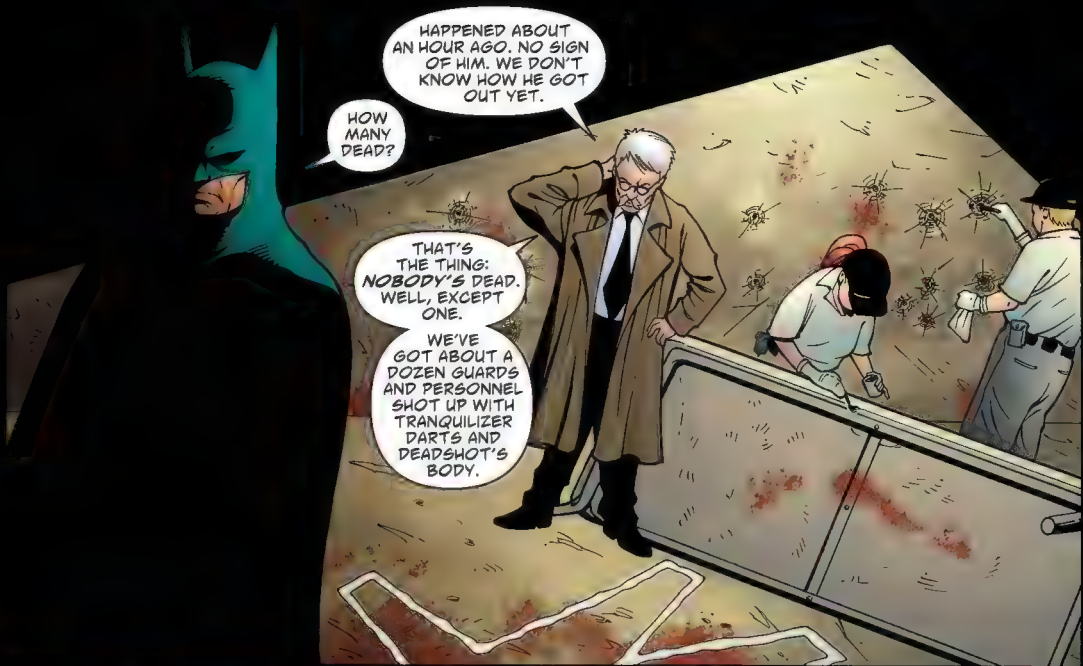
HE SAID TO TELL YOU...

COMING THROUGH! MAKE A HOLE!

"CODE GREEN."

NOT AGAIN.

ARKHAM ASYLUM



HAPPENED ABOUT AN HOUR AGO. NO SIGN OF HIM. WE DON'T KNOW HOW HE GOT OUT YET.

HOW MANY DEAD?

THAT'S THE THING: **NOBODY'S DEAD.** WELL, EXCEPT ONE.

WE'VE GOT ABOUT A DOZEN GUARDS AND PERSONNEL SHOT UP WITH TRANQUILIZER DARTS AND DEADSHOT'S BODY.

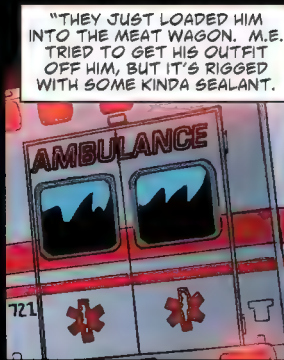


BODY?

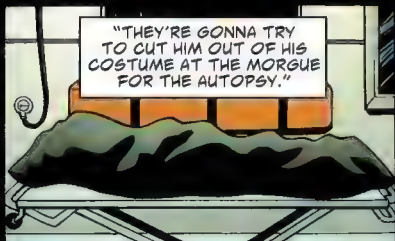
YEAH. LOOKS LIKE SOMEBODY BLEW HIS BRAINS OUT.

NEAREST WE CAN FIGURE IS DEADSHOT BROKE IN TO BUST THE CLOWN OUT, AND THEN THE JOKER TURNED ON HIM.

WHERE'S DEADSHOT?



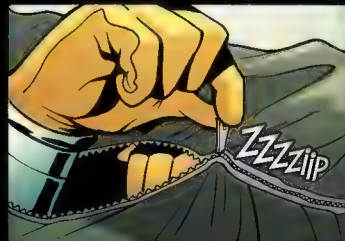
"THEY JUST LOADED HIM INTO THE MEAT WAGON. M.E. TRIED TO GET HIS OUTFIT OFF HIM, BUT IT'S RIGGED WITH SOME KINDA SEALANT.



"THEY'RE GONNA TRY TO CUT HIM OUT OF HIS COSTUME AT THE MORGUE FOR THE AUTOPSY."



Zzzz



Zzzzip



UHN...

LAWTON.



AHHH!



YOU SPOOKY ---!

LOOKING FOR THESE?

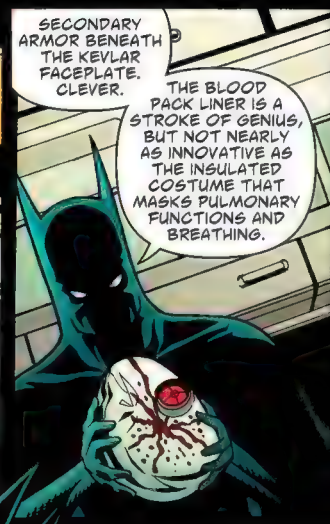
NOW UNLOCK YOUR MASK BEFORE I BEAT YOU INTO A COMA.



SIGHS



BITE-ACTIVATED LOCKING MECHANISM. INTERESTING.



SECONDARY ARMOR BENEATH THE KEVLAR FACEPLATE. CLEVER.

THE BLOOD PACK LINER IS A STROKE OF GENIUS, BUT NOT NEARLY AS INNOVATIVE AS THE INSULATED COSTUME THAT MASKS PULMONARY FUNCTIONS AND BREATHING.



ALL DESIGNED SO YOU CAN PLAY POSSUM IF YOU'RE SHOT.

SCORE ANOTHER ONE FOR THE GREAT MOUSE DETECTIVE.

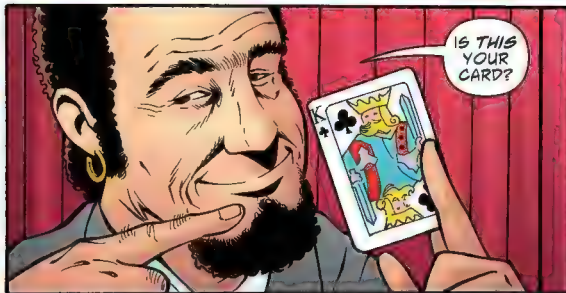
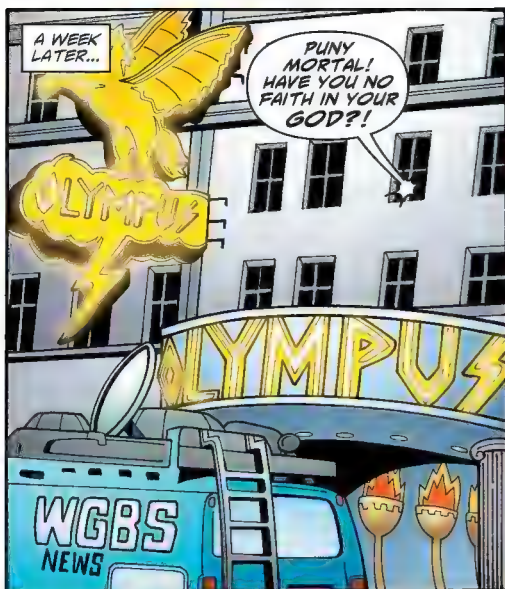
YOU GOT A CIGARETTE?

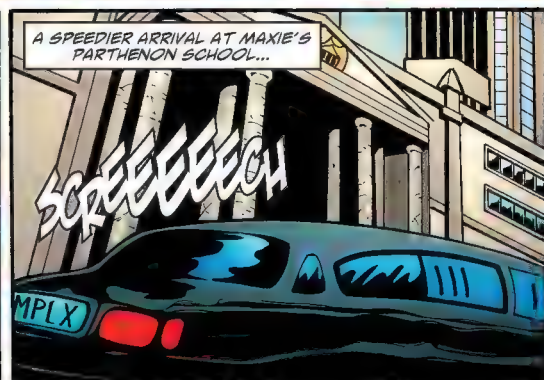
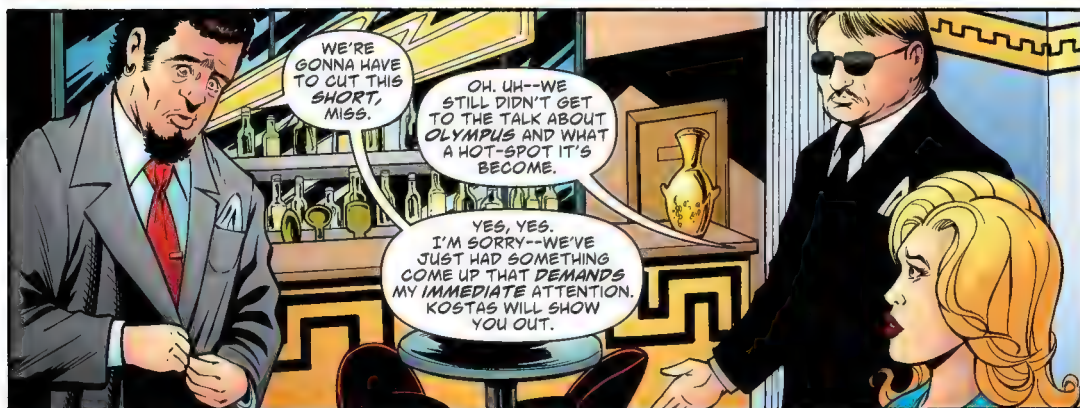
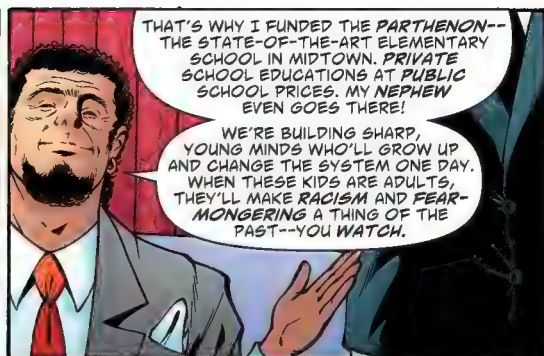
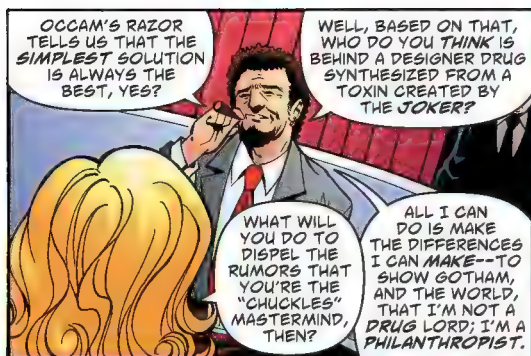


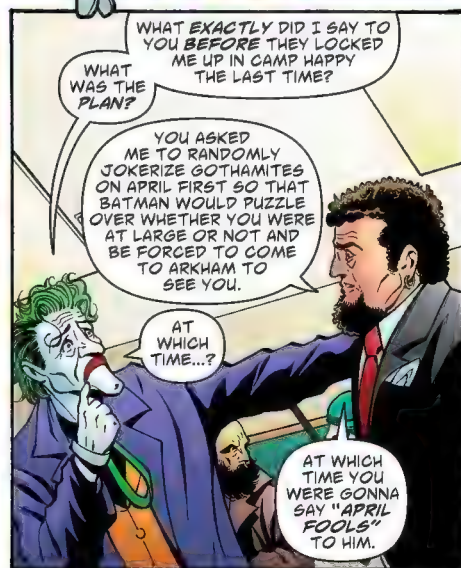
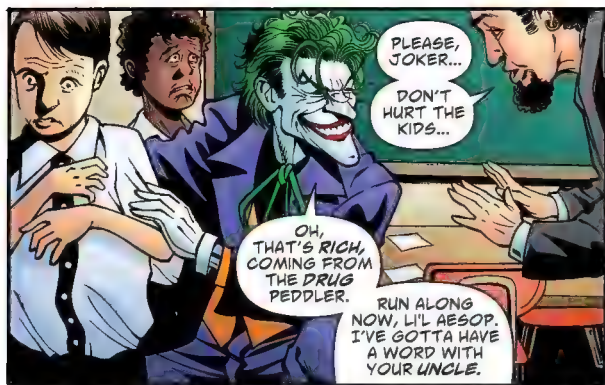
WHAT THE HELL DID YOU DO, LAWTON?! WHY DID YOU BREAK THE JOKER OUT OF ARKHAM?!

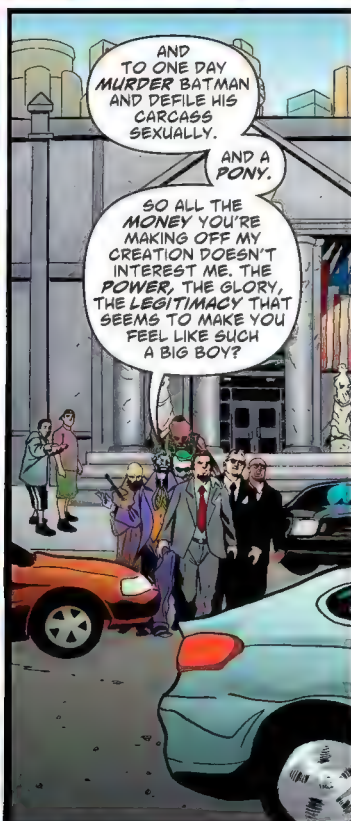
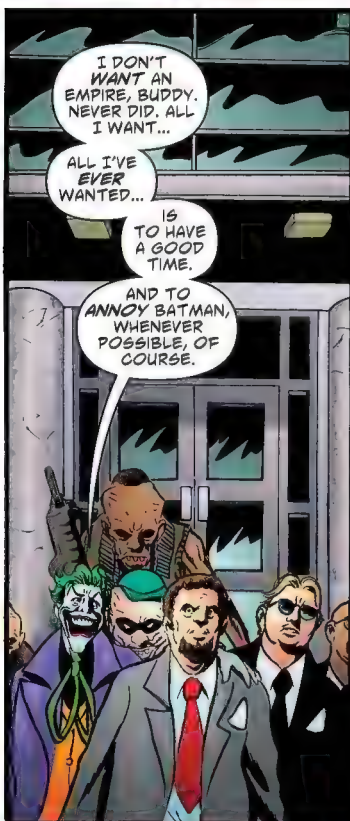
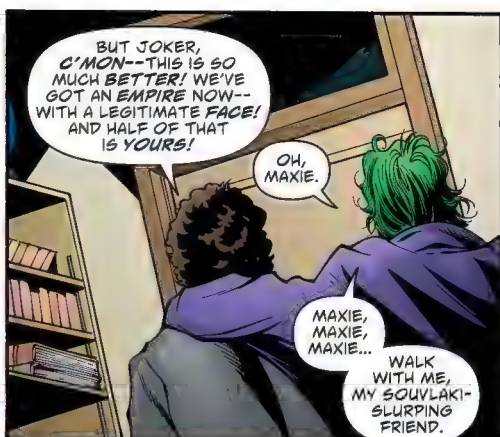
I WASN'T THERE TO BREAK HIM OUT, I SWEAR! I WAS HIRED TO KILL HIM BY THE FATHER OF SOME KID WHO O.D.'ED ON "CHUCKLES"! THEN THIS OTHER GUY SHOWED UP AND STARTED SHOOTING AT ME!

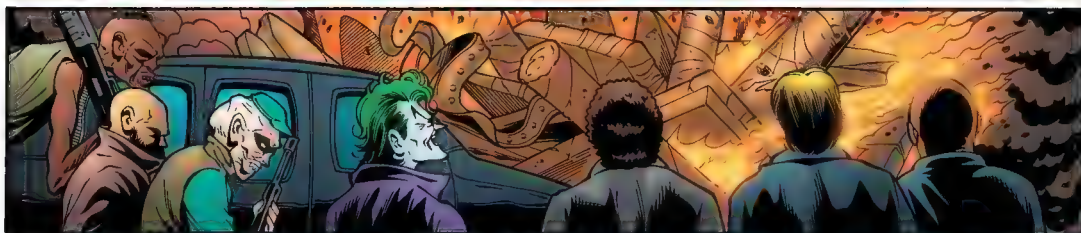














Andy Kubert



AS IN EVERY MAJOR CITY, FRIDAY NIGHTS IN GOTHAM BELONG TO THE CLUB CROWD.



EVEN IN THE MIST OF A CITYWIDE GANG WAR BETWEEN THIS CLUB'S OWNER--MAXIE ZEUS--AND THE URBAN TERRORIST KNOWN ONLY AS THE JOKER, GOTHAMITES SHRUG OFF ANY POSSIBLE THREAT TO THEIR WELL-BEING IN FAVOR OF SURRENDERING TO THE LESSER NATURE OF THEIR ANGELS.

COCAINE AND SPEED FIND NO TAKERS IN CLUB OLYMPUS LATELY. "CHUCKLES"--THE METHAMPHETAMINE DERIVED FROM THE JOKER'S OWN "VENOM"--RULES THE DAY.



THAT IT'S MANUFACTURED AND DISTRIBUTED BY THE CLUB'S OWNER DOESN'T DICTATE THE DEMAND; GOTHAM IS IN THE THROES OF A LOVE AFFAIR WITH "CHUCKLES."

BUT IT'S NOT JUST "CHUCKLES" THAT'S DRAWING THE CROWD TONIGHT. WORLD-RENOUNDED DJ MITE IS BACK IN TOWN AFTER A MASSIVE EUROPEAN TOUR.

AND GOTHAM WILL ALWAYS CELEBRATE ITS OWN...



ESPECIALLY IF THEY DROP THE PHAT BEATS AND SPORT A GIMMICKY COSTUME.

WHAT THE ADORING, INEBRIATED CROWD DOESN'T KNOW IS THAT DJ MITE'S BODY WAS JUST FOUND IN HIS HOTEL BATHROOM BY A MAID WHO CAME FOR TURN-DOWN SERVICE.



HIS HEAD WAS LOCATED A HALF HOUR LATER BY THE POLICE, STUFFED IN THE MINI-BAR.



HA HA HA HA
HA HA HA HA!

I AM
PROMETHEUS!

I BRING YOU
FIRE FROM
OLYMPUS!

FWOOSH

AAAAHHH!



ITE

FUOOOSH

NOOOOO!

AHHHHH!

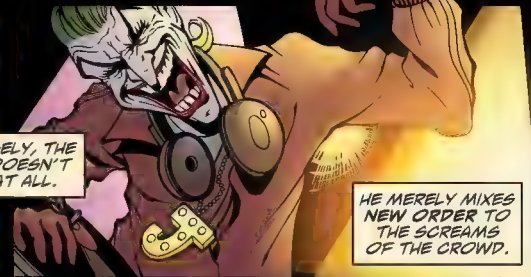




"NOT HERE!" IS THE FIRST THOUGHT TO CROSS MAXIE ZEUS'S FRAGILE MIND.

"AN ATTACK BY TARTARUS ON MY MIGHTY OLYMPUS?!"

CONVERSELY, THE JOKER DOESN'T THINK AT ALL.



HE MERELY MIXES NEW ORDER TO THE SCREAMS OF THE CROWD.



WHADDAYA THINK, MAXIE?!



IT'S GOT A BEAT YOU CAN DANCE TO!

HA HA HA HA
HA HA HA HA
HA HA HA HA



FWOOOSH

BUDDA
BUDDA
BUDDA
BUDDA




AHHHHH!



Common sense screams at me...

"Let him burn."

A large panel showing Batman in flight, his cape billowing out, as he moves through a background of intense orange and yellow flames. He is wearing his iconic black suit and yellow utility belt.


But I live--and will likely
one day DIE--by a code.

A medium panel showing Batman holding a man with a beard and a headband. Batman is looking down at the man with a serious expression. The background is filled with flames and falling debris.

ONE day...

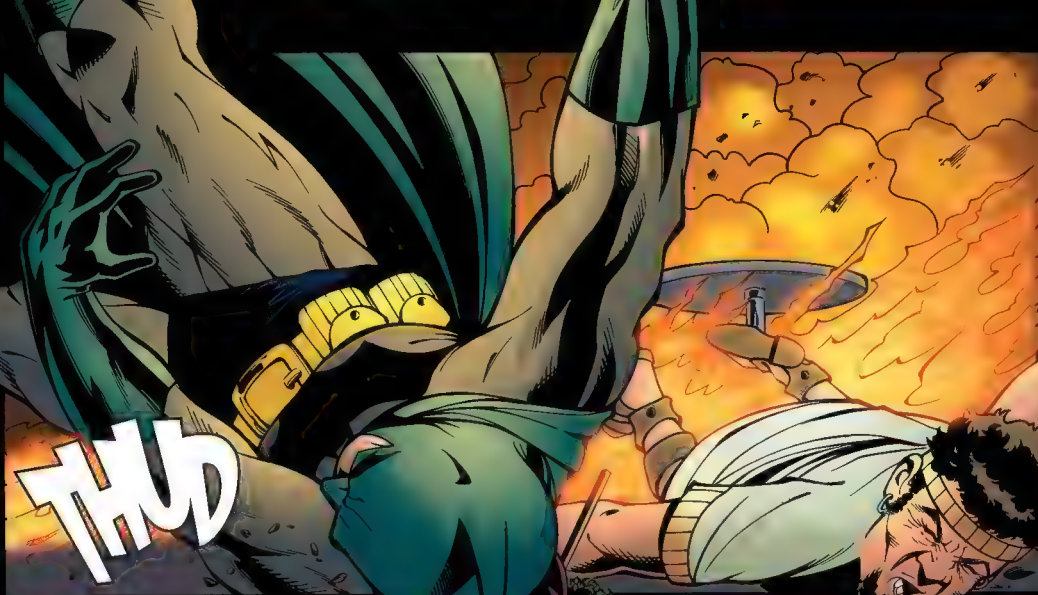
A close-up panel of a hand holding a large, silver handgun, firing a bullet. The word "PAF!" is written in a stylized, jagged font next to the muzzle flash.

PAF!

A large panel showing Batman dodging a bullet fired from the man he is holding. Batman is in a dynamic pose, his body angled to avoid the incoming shot. The background is a chaotic scene of fire and debris.

...NOT TODAY.

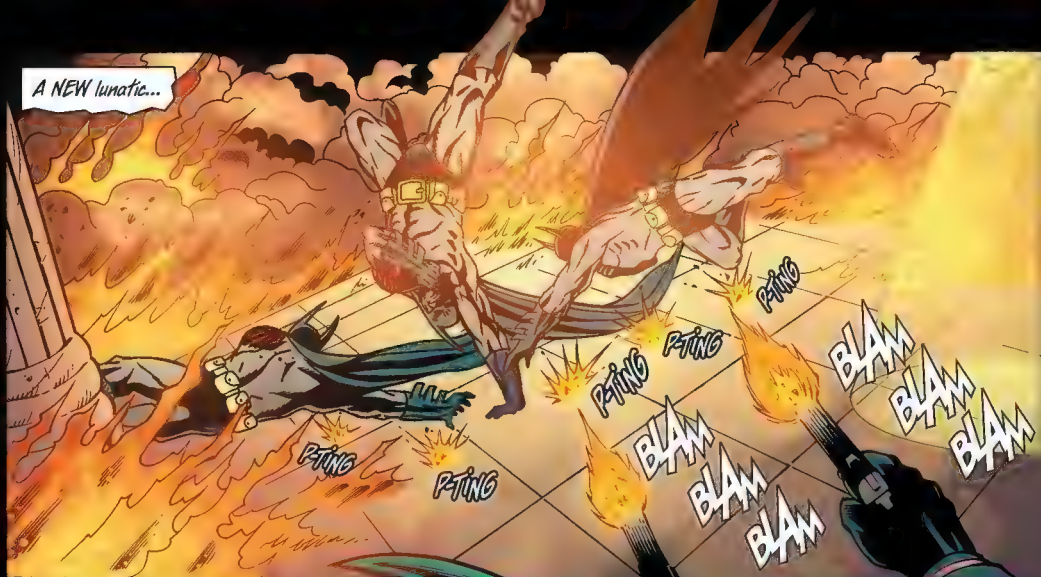






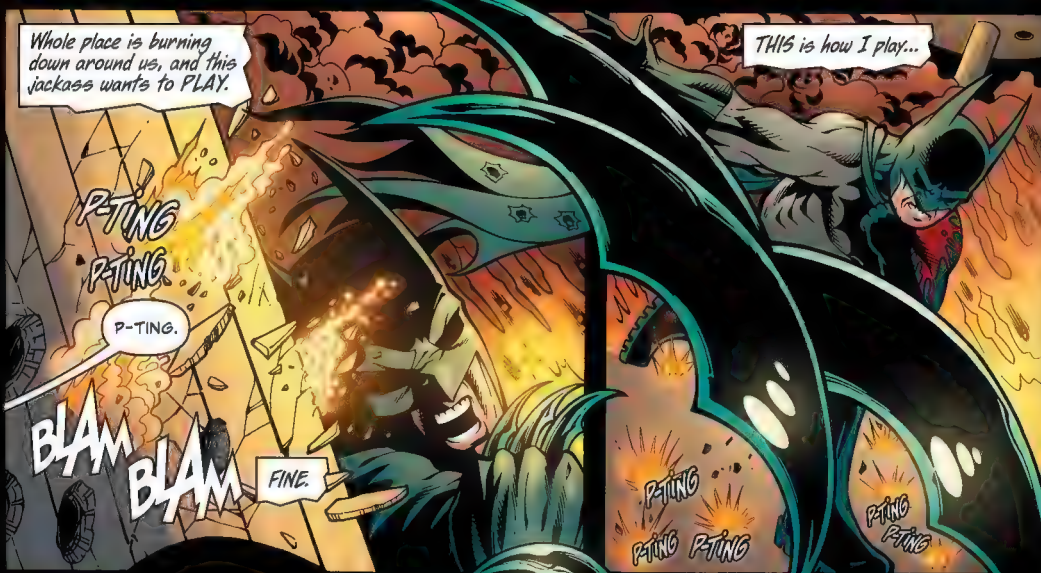


A NEW lunatic...



Whole place is burning down around us, and this jackass wants to PLAY.

THIS is how I play...





I've been COUNTING your bullets.

With one gun DOWN and no audible RELOADS...

The next sound you APE is gonna be...



Or...



They're running out of GIMMICKS and KINKS, these idiots...

CLICK... POW...

HELL have plenty of time to think of a new one in BLACKGATE.



UHN!

SWISHHH!



Blood loss...
is starting to
get to me...

Keep it
together,
Bruce...

Grab the Joker and
get out of here...

Before the rest of
the ceiling collapses.

Gone...

EAT YOUR
HEART OUT

Figures.

THE CAVE. LATER.

IF YOU
EVER WANTED
TO TRIPLE THE
WAYNE FORTUNE,
MASTER
BRUCE...

ALL YOU'D NEED
DO IS INVEST
IN A SUTURE
MANUFACTURER.

COMPUTER:
PULL UP THE
FILES ON STAR
CITY MASKED
JOHN DOE.



ANOTHER
OF GOTHAM'S
UPSTANDING
CITIZENS?

THIS ONE'S NOT
GOTHAM-BASED.
I DON'T KNOW WHO
HE IS. ALL I'VE GOT ON
HIM IS THAT HE TRIED TO
KILL CONNOR HAWKE,
THE SECOND GREEN
ARROW.

FURTHER
PROOF THAT NO
LEAGUER SHOULD
EVER LET SOMEONE
ELSE ASSUME
THEIR MANTLE.

I'M SURE
JEAN PAUL
VALLEY WOULD
BE HEARTBROKEN
TO HEAR YOU SAY
THAT, SIR.

FUNNY.

Harrisburg Times
BUCKEYE HONORED BY CITY

HE ALSO KILLED
TWO LESSER-
KNOWN VIGILANTES
IN PENNSYLVANIA.

SO SOMEONE
HAS A FILE ON HIM,
THEN, THAT WOULD
INCLUDE HIS IDENTITY
OR AT LEAST
A NAME?

NO--I PUT THAT
TOGETHER MYSELF,
WHEN I MATCHED THE
BALLISTICS IN THE
KILLINGS OF VIRAGO
AND BUCKEYE TO THE
SLUGS THEY PULLED
FROM CONNOR.

HOW DID
YOU ACCESS
THE CONNOR
HAWKE
SLUGS?

I LIBERATED
THEM FROM
STAR CITY GENERAL
SHORTLY AFTER
THE INCIDENT.

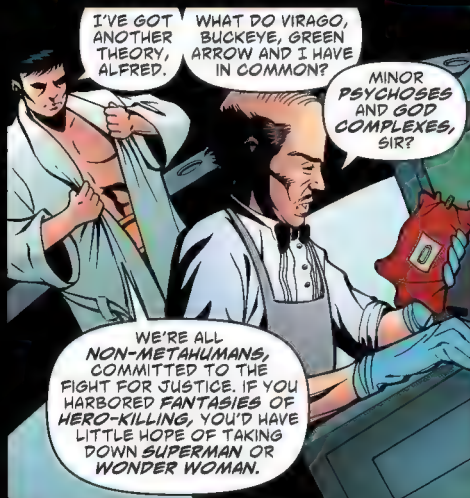
YOU MOST
DEFINITELY
NEED A HOBBY,
MASTER
BRUCE.



SO WE'RE TO ASSUME, THEN, THAT THE JOKER IS IN COLLUSION WITH THIS HERO-KILLER?

I'M NOT SURE. WE COULD JUST VIEW HIS SUDDEN APPEARANCE AT THE CLUB AS NOTHING MORE THAN FORTUITOUS TIMING FROM WHICH THE JOKER BENEFITED.

BUT IF HE MATCHES THE DESCRIPTION DEAD-SHOT GAVE YOU FROM THE ARKHAM BREAK-IN AND HE STOPPED YOU FROM PUTTING DOWN THE JOKER THIS EVENING, WE MUST SURMISE THE PAIR ARE WORKING TOGETHER, DO WE NOT?



I'VE GOT ANOTHER THEORY, ALFRED.

WHAT DO VIRAGO, BUCKEYE, GREEN ARROW AND I HAVE IN COMMON?

MINOR PSYCHOSES AND GOD COMPLEXES, SIR?

WE'RE ALL NON-METAHUMANS, COMMITTED TO THE FIGHT FOR JUSTICE. IF YOU HARBORED FANTASIES OF HERO-KILLING, YOU'D HAVE LITTLE HOPE OF TAKING DOWN SUPERMAN OR WONDER WOMAN.



BUT A NORMAL PERSON SUCH AS YOURSELF, SIR...

AND I USE THE TERM "NORMAL" VERY LOOSELY...

...WOULD MAKE FOR A CONCEIVABLE TARGET.

EXACTLY.



EVERYONE KNOWS THAT, WHEN THE JOKER'S AT LARGE, I'LL CONCENTRATE ALL MY EFFORTS ON APPREHENDING HIM.

SO MAYBE BREAKING THE JOKER OUT OF ARKHAM WAS THIS MANIAC'S WAY OF DANGLING BAIT.

I WANT YOU TO KEEP TIM AS FAR AWAY FROM THIS AS POSSIBLE, ALFRED. KEEP HIM IN THE DARK ON THIS ONE. BECAUSE IF MY THEORY IS CORRECT...



I'M BEING HUNTED.



THE NEXT NIGHT...

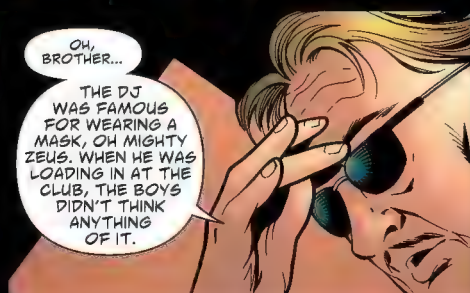
HOW, I ASK OF THEE!

HOW COULDST THOU ALLOW THIS GREEK TRAGEDY TO BEFALL THE MIGHTY ZEUS?!?



THE DJ WAS FAMOUS FOR WEARING A MASK, BOSS...

CALL ME ONLY BY MY HOLY NAME, MORTAL!



OH, BROTHER...

THE DJ WAS FAMOUS FOR WEARING A MASK, OH MIGHTY ZEUS, WHEN HE WAS LOADING IN AT THE CLUB, THE BOYS DIDN'T THINK ANYTHING OF IT.



A FABLE, THOU OFFERS ME! WE ARE ENTRENCHED IN BATTLE WITH THE FORCES OF TARTARUS, AND THOU THINKS NOT TO UNMASK THE FIEND BEFORE HE ASCENDS MOUNT OLYMPUS!

DUE TO THY CARELESSNESS, PARADISE LIES IN RUINS!







MAN...
FOUR VIRGINS
AT HIS BECK AND
CALL ALL NIGHT? I
WANNA BE A CRAZY
DUDE WHO THINKS
HE'S A GOD.

VIRGINS
DON'T CHARGE
BY THE HOUR, IF
YOU KNOW WHAT
I MEAN.



MMMMM...
THY
DELICATE
TOUCHES
PLEASETH
THE MIGHTY
ZEUS...



YES...SEND
THY GENTLE CARESSES
ELSEWHERE...

BUT LEAVETH
ME ONE HAND, THAT
I MIGHT SUCKLE
THY THUMB.



DEAR
LADY--WHY
DOST THOU
WEAR A
GLOVE TO
MY BED?



ULK!



HELLO,
MAXIE.

HOPE I'M NOT
INTERRUPTING.

CHARON!

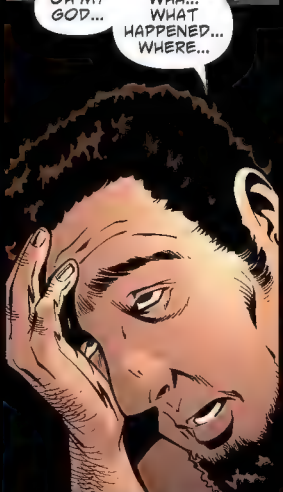
DON'T MIND
THE MASSIVE DOSE OF
ANTIPSYCHOTICS...



I JUST
NEED TO HAVE
A LESS DIVINE
DISCUSSION
WITH YOU.



"AND I'VE
ARRANGED IT
SO WE WON'T
BE BOTHERED."



OH MY
GOD...

WHA...
WHAT
HAPPENED...
WHERE...

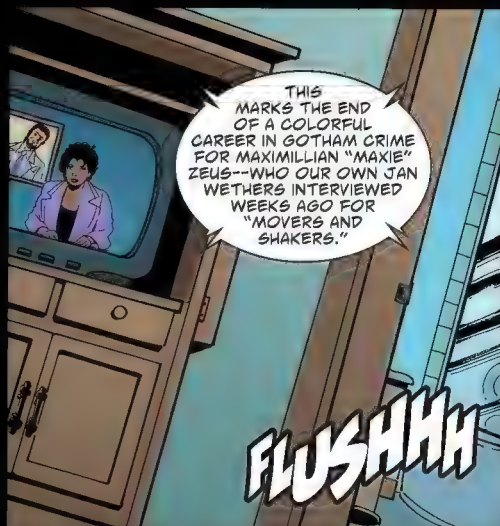






QUIET!

CAN'T YOU SEE I'M THINKING?! SHEESH...



THIS MARKS THE END OF A COLORFUL CAREER IN GOTHAM CRIME FOR MAXIMILIAN "MAXIE" ZEUS--WHO OUR OWN JAN WETHERS INTERVIEWED WEEKS AGO FOR "MOVERS AND SHAKERS."

FLUSHHH



NO WAY! MAXIE ZEUS GOT ARRESTED?

I'VE GOT FRIENDS WHO WERE BOOKED FOR HIM TONIGHT.

FWASSSS

"ALL I CAN DO IS MAKE THE DIFFERENCE I CAN MAKE--TO SHOW GOTHAM, AND THE WORLD, THAT I'M NOT A DRUG LORD; I'M A PHILANTHROPIST."



THAT GUY'S TOO INTO BEING THINGS, IF YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN.

NOT LIKE YOU--THE GENTLE JOHN.

I ALMOST HATE TO CHARGE YOU, BUT Y'KNOW--IT'S A LIVING.

"I THINK IT'S TRAGIC THAT IN THIS, THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY, THERE'S STILL RAMPANT ETHNIC DISCRIMINATION. I'M A GREEK--A FOREIGNER--SO NATURALLY, I MUST BE UP TO NO GOOD."



OH. I THOUGHT THIS WAS A HAND TOWEL. MY BAD.

"LOOK, I GET IT: I'VE HAD SOME PRETTY PUBLIC EXTENDED PSYCHOLOGICAL BREAKDOWNS."



A MASK? BABY, IF YOU WANTED TO PLAY DRESS-UP, ALL YOU HADDA DO WAS ASK.

"I'VE PAID MY DEBTS TO SOCIETY, SO TO SPEAK, AND NOW I JUST WANNA CONTINUE BUILDING THE COMPANY I LET SLIP AWAY WHILE I WAS BATTLING MENTAL ILLNESS."

FLUSHHH.

FWASSSS.



FLUSH-
FWASS TO
YOU TOO.

GGIGGLES

COSTUMES
AND FUNNY NOISES?
YOU LETTING YOUR
PLAYFUL SIDE OUT,
ALL OF A SUDDEN.

WELL,
MY NEXT
APPOINTMENT'S
NOT 'TIL EIGHT,
SO IF YOU WANNA
EXPLORE YOUR
KINKIER SIDE, I'LL
ONLY CHARGE YOU
HALF FOR THE
NEXT HOUR.

WE TAKE
YOU NOW, LIVE,
TO GOTHAM
CENTRAL, WHERE MAXIE
ZEUS IS TALKING
TO REPORTERS
ABOUT HIS
SURRENDER.



WHY NOW,
MAXIE? WHY TURN
YOURSELF IN AND
CONFESS?

WHAT'S
THAT? A
KNIFE?

BABY,
I SAID
KINKIER, NOT
SCARY. PUT
THAT...



BECAUSE
I'D RATHER ROT
IN JAIL THAN GET
KILLED BY THE JOKER,
THAT'S WHY. I'M NO
DUMMY: WITH ALL THESE
COPS AROUND, THERE'S
NO WAY THAT CLOWN
CAN GET ME
NOW.



SRUB-SRUB

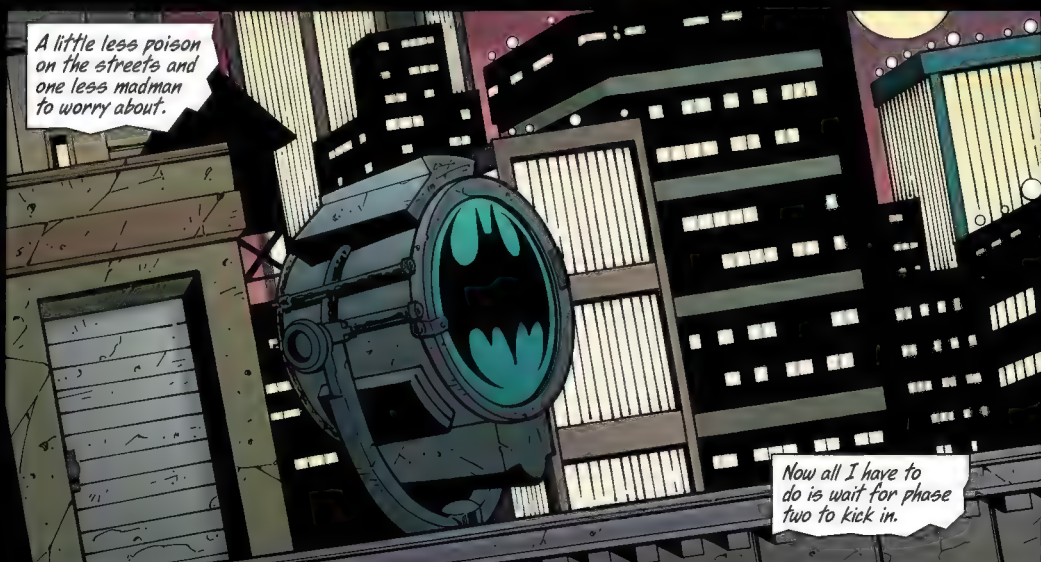
SHHHHUNNT.

SRUB-SRUB.

AND
ONCE THEY
TURN ME OVER
TO THE FEDS?
THAT FREAK'LL
NEVER FIND
ME EVER
AGAIN.



SO, YEAH--
I'D SAY THAT'S
A GREAT REASON TO
TURN MYSELF IN TO
COMMISSIONER GORDON
AND THE GOOD FOLKS
AT GOTHAM
CENTRAL.



I figured the televised heavy police presence would keep him from trying to get in on the ground floor.

Which left only one way for him to get to Zeus, if he wanted him bad enough.

And I KNEW he'd want Zeus bad enough.

A doctor at Arkham once described for me the Joker's state of mind.

"Imagine trying to solve the world's most difficult math equation..."

"While you're surrounded by six televisions that sit five inches from your face..."

"All tuned to different stations..."

"All rapidly switching channels..."

"All with the volume at full blast."

"That's what it's like to be the Joker."

You'd think that'd make the Joker an unfathomable foe, impossible to figure out.

But for a capricious, homicidal psychopath with off-the-charts attention deficit disorder...





It's like fighting
a WIND CHIME.



How he ever got
the drop on JASON
I'll never know.

It's the same old moves
from his ANCIENT playbook.
I go through the MOTIONS.



HUH?

HN'OW!
HN'OW!
HN'OW!

YOU
JUST HAD TO
COME AFTER
MAXIE, DIDN'T
YOU?

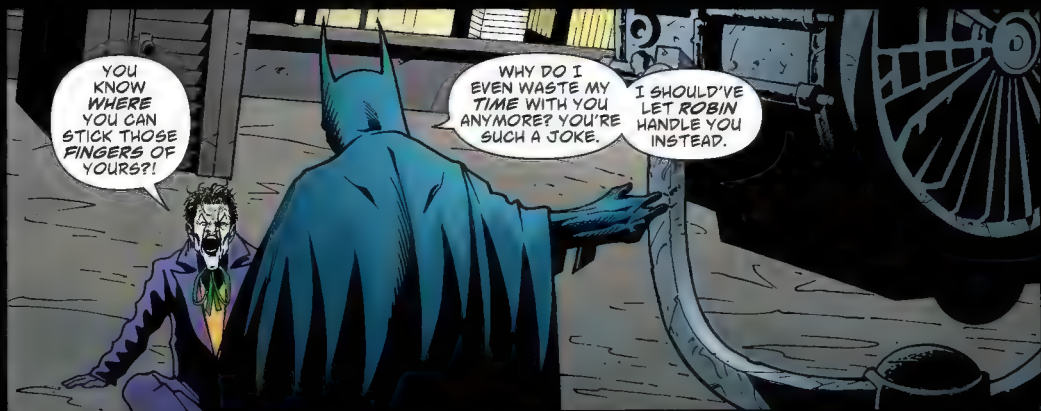
HN'I'M
HN'ONNA
H'ILL
H'OU!!!

I KNEW
YOUR EGO
WOULD TRUMP
WHAT'S LEFT OF
YOUR COMMON
SENSE.



UHN!

KA-THUD



YOU
KNOW
WHERE
YOU CAN
STICK THOSE
FINGERS OF
YOURS?!

WHY DO I
EVEN WASTE MY
TIME WITH YOU
ANYMORE? YOU'RE
SUCH A JOKE.

I SHOULD'VE
LET ROBIN
HANDLE YOU
INSTEAD.



WHO'RE
YOU KIDDING?
YOU LIVE FOR
MOMENTS LIKE THIS:
WHEN WE'RE AT
EACH OTHER'S
THROATS!



WHO THE
HELL WOULD
YOU EVEN BE
WITHOUT YOUR
GREATEST
FOE?!



NUTS...

SWIFF
SWIFF
SWIFF



WEEEEEE!



MY
"GREATEST
FOE"?

THERE WAS A
TIME I CONSIDERED
YOU MY SECOND MOST
DANGEROUS ENEMY.
BUT YOU'VE GONE
SOFT, CLOWN.

NOW IT'D
BE GENEROUS
TO LIST YOU
AT NUMBER
SIXTEEN.



YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE SO HURTFUL ABOUT IT...

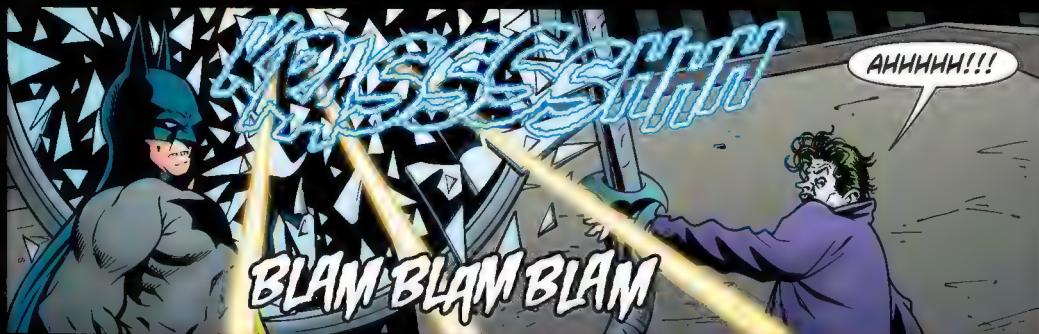
JUST BEING HONEST.

YOU'RE NOT EVEN CLEVER ENOUGH TO SEE ALL THE ANGLES LIKE YOU USED TO.

IF YOU WERE, YOU'D HAVE FIGURED OUT THAT NEITHER YOUR BENEFACTOR NOR I HAVE SEEN YOU AS A PLAYER, THIS TIME AROUND...



YOU'RE JUST BAIT.



AHHHHH!!!

BLAM BLAM BLAM



BLAM. BLAM. KRASSSSHHH.

Phase three.

Right on schedule.









HA HA HA HA
HA HA HA HA!



UHN!







UHN...
UHN...

Head still ringing,
but it'll pass.

Leg's killing me too,
but it was worth it.

Knew I could count
on the Joker to
BE the Joker.



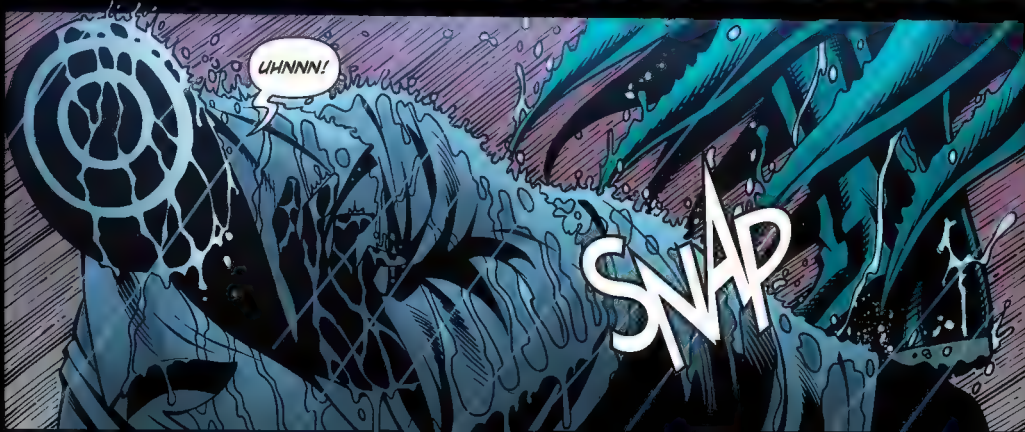
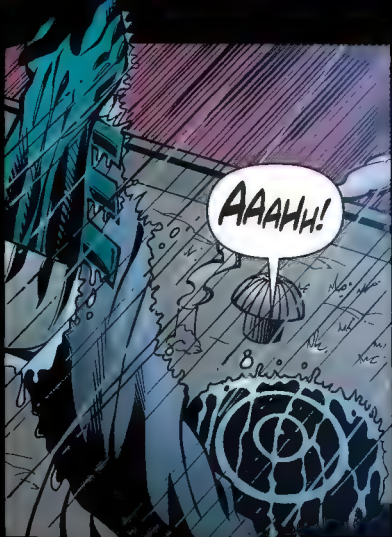
But I owe a
bigger thanks
to Floyd Lawton.

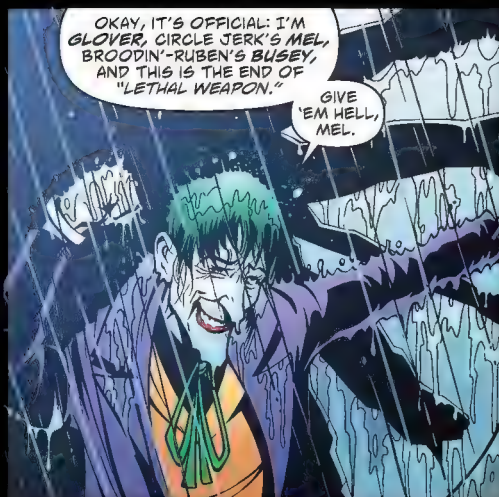
I "borrowed" Deadshot's helmet
technology: the secondary armor
beneath the Kevlar headpiece, the
blood pack liner for that Grand
Guignol effect.

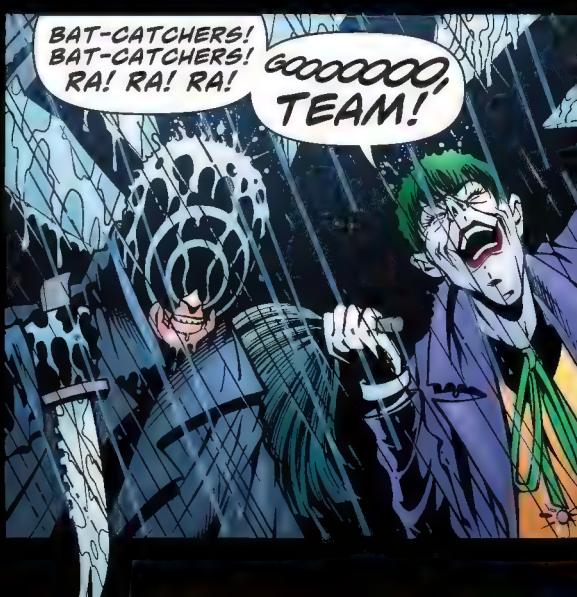
Hate to adopt one of
THEIR innovations,
but hell...

A good idea's
a good idea.













SONOVA...!

B...BATMAN!



HOLD ON.
I'VE GOT
YOU.

OOO...
IT KINDA
STINGS...



It's a TEST.

He wants to see
what I'll do.



Save the
Joker...

Or chase
his killer.



I know what
I SHOULD do...



I just CAN'T.



And I know I'm gonna pay for it.

One day.



Not today.

SLAM

KA-KLINK

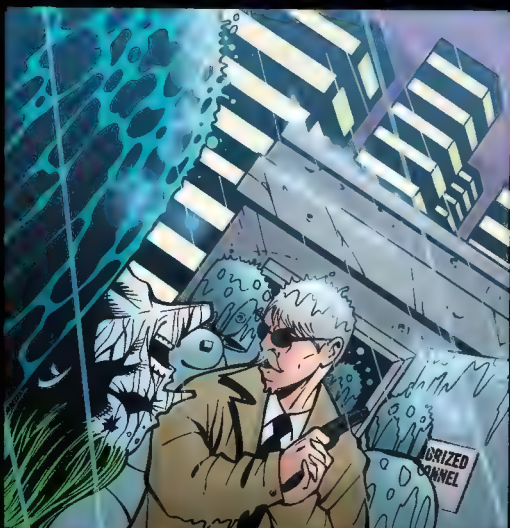
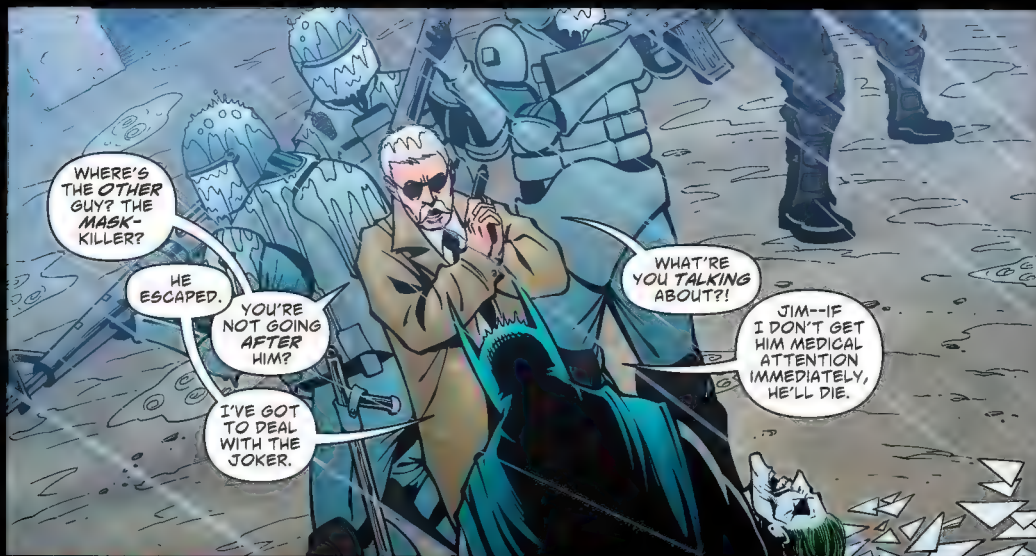


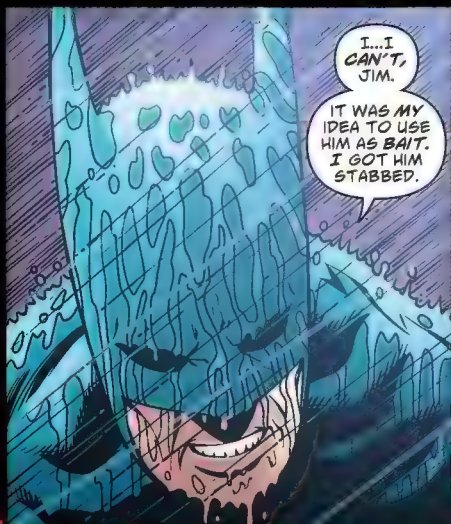
WHAT HAPPENED??
WHERE IS HE?!



HE
NICKED
HIS HEART,
JIM.

LEFT
VENTRICLE.





I...I
CAN'T,
JIM.

IT WAS MY
IDEA TO USE
HIM AS BAIT.
I GOT HIM
STABBED.



GOOD!

JIM...

DON'T
"JIM" ME! HE'S
A MONSTER
AND YOU
KNOW IT!

HE'S A
HUMAN
BEING
TOO!

ARE YOU
SURE?!



THINK OF ALL THE
HORROR HE'S PUT
GOTHAM THROUGH!

"WHAT HE DID
TO BARBARA..."

"WHAT HE'S
DONE TO YOU!"



I KNOW YOU LIVE BY A CODE, AND I'D NEVER ASK YOU TO BREAK IT.

BUT I'M NOT ASKING YOU TO KILL HIM.

I'M JUST ASKING YOU NOT TO SAVE HIM!

YOU DIDN'T DO THIS. YOU DIDN'T STAB HIM. THIS IS HIS DOING. HE MADE HIS CHOICES.



HE CAN'T MAKE CHOICES, JIM.

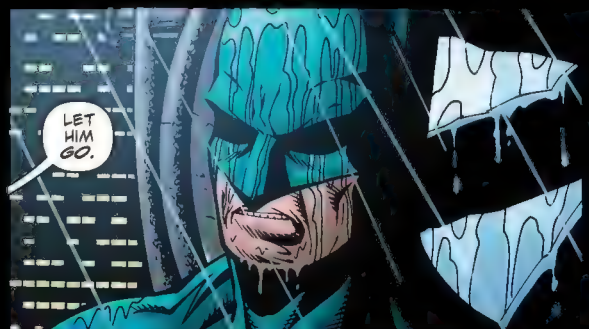
HE'S INSANE.

INSANITY WOULD BE KEEPING HIM ALIVE, SO HE CAN DROP ANOTHER BUILDING ON ANOTHER BUNCH OF SCHOOL KIDS!

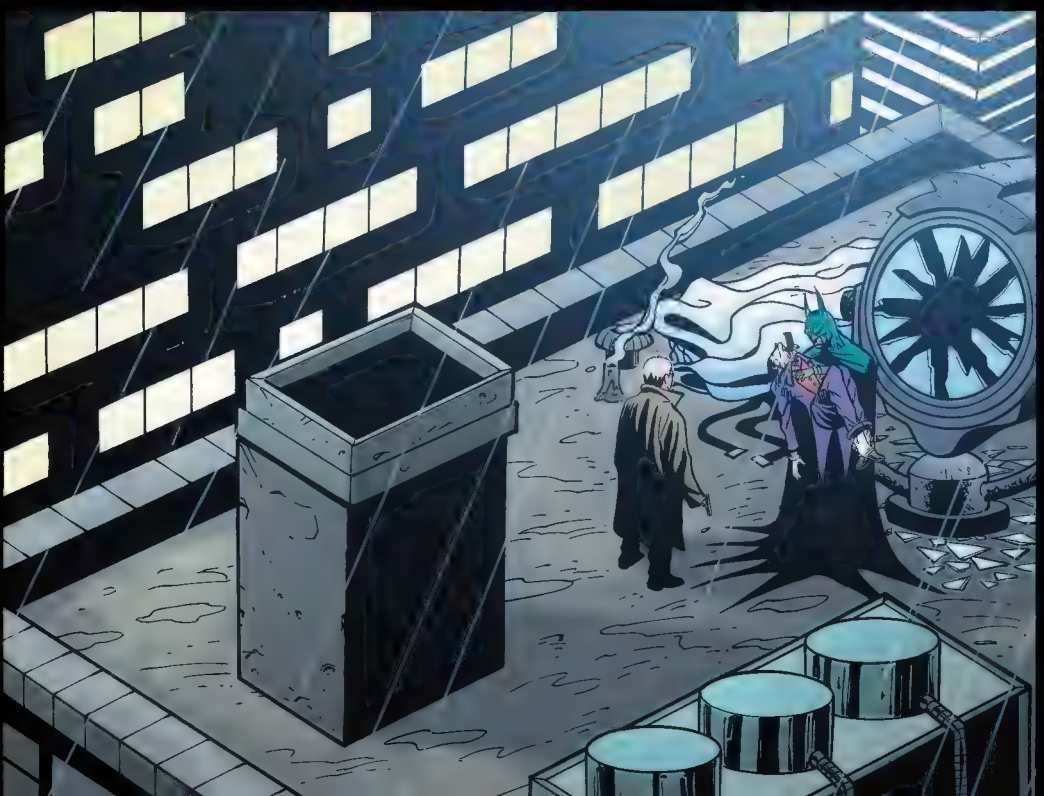


DO THE RIGHT THING HERE. FOR GOTHAM'S SAKE...

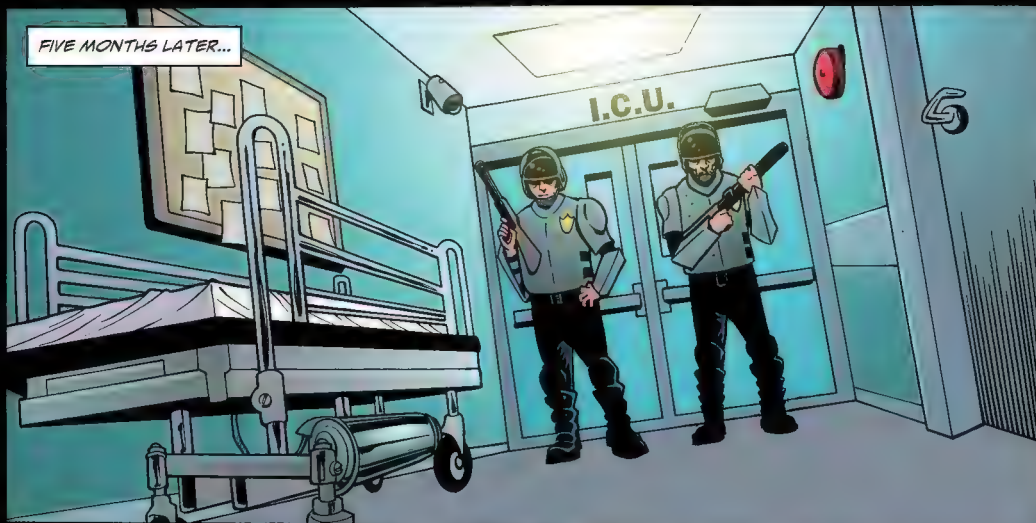
FOR YOUR SAKE...



LET HIM GO.



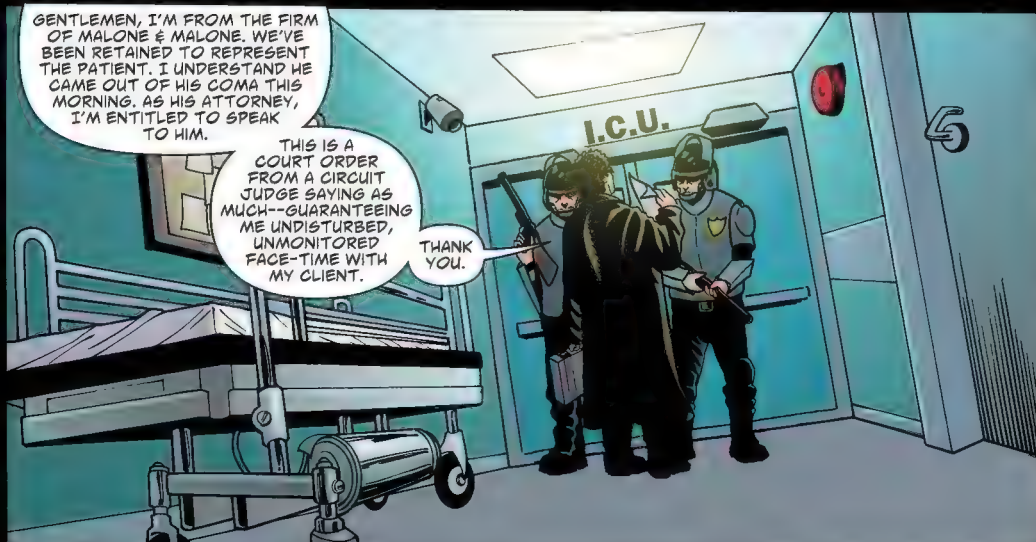
FIVE MONTHS LATER...



GENTLEMEN, I'M FROM THE FIRM OF MALONE & MALONE. WE'VE BEEN RETAINED TO REPRESENT THE PATIENT. I UNDERSTAND HE CAME OUT OF HIS COMA THIS MORNING. AS HIS ATTORNEY, I'M ENTITLED TO SPEAK TO HIM.

THIS IS A COURT ORDER FROM A CIRCUIT JUDGE SAYING AS MUCH--GUARANTEEING ME UNDISTURBED, UNMONITORED FACE-TIME WITH MY CLIENT.

THANK YOU.











I USED TO THINK I'D BE OKAY WITH YOU DYING OR GETTING KILLED, SO LONG AS IT WASN'T BY MY HAND OR THE HANDS OF ANY OF MY ASSOCIATES.

WHEN YOU SKY-DIVED ONTO THE ROOF OF GOTHAM CENTRAL, I FANTASIZED ABOUT YOUR CHUTE MALFUNCTIONING AND YOU PANCAKING ONTO A CURB SOMEWHERE IN THE MIDDLE OF THE CITY.

BUT IN THE MOMENT OF TRUTH, WITH THAT KNIFE STICKING OUT OF YOUR CHEST?

I COULDN'T DO IT. I COULDN'T LET YOU DIE.

FOR ALL THE TRUE EVIL YOU'VE DONE, THE LIVES YOU'VE RUINED, AND THE PAIN YOU'VE INFLICTED, I COULDN'T JUST STAND THERE AND WATCH YOU BLEED OUT--EVEN THOUGH I KNEW IT MEANT GIVING UP A KIND OF PEACE I'VE NEVER KNOWN BEFORE. A KIND OF PEACE I'LL NEVER KNOW.

WHY, DO YOU THINK? WHY NOT JUST ENJOY THE ULTIMATE VICTORY?

I'VE WATCHED PEOPLE DIE BEFORE.

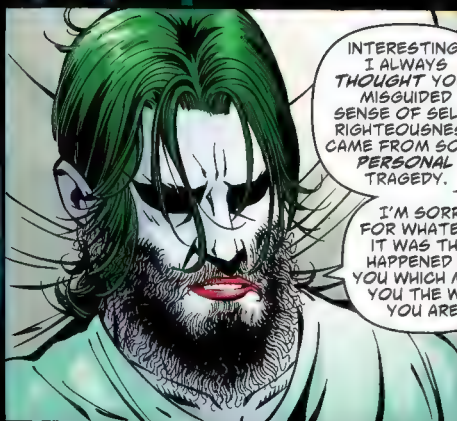
I SWORE THEN: NEVER AGAIN.





MY WHOLE
LIFE...ALL
OF THIS.

IT'S ALL
BECAUSE I
NEVER WANT
TO SEE DEATH
FIRST-HAND
AGAIN.



INTERESTING.
I ALWAYS
THOUGHT YOUR
MISGUIDED
SENSE OF SELF-
RIGHTEOUSNESS
CAME FROM SOME
PERSONAL
TRAGEDY.

I'M SORRY
FOR WHATEVER
IT WAS THAT
HAPPENED TO
YOU WHICH MADE
YOU THE WAY
YOU ARE.

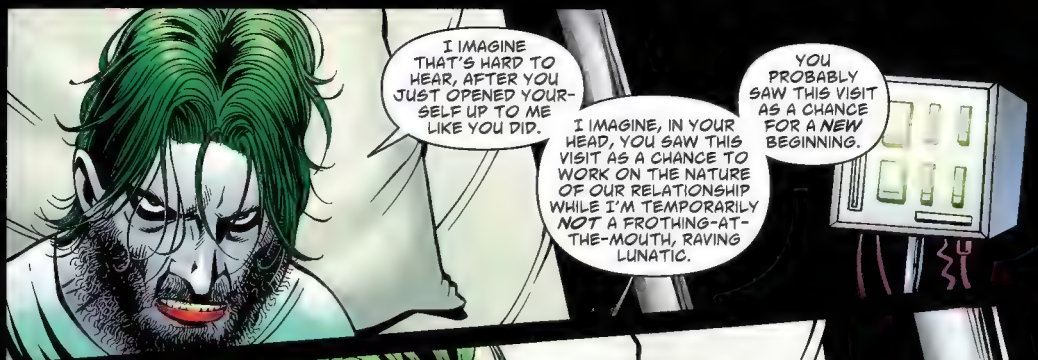


BUT?



BUT I DO
WANT TO
KILL YOU.





I IMAGINE THAT'S HARD TO HEAR, AFTER YOU JUST OPENED YOURSELF UP TO ME LIKE YOU DID.

I IMAGINE, IN YOUR HEAD, YOU SAW THIS VISIT AS A CHANCE TO WORK ON THE NATURE OF OUR RELATIONSHIP WHILE I'M TEMPORARILY NOT A FROTHING-AT-THE-MOUTH, RAVING LUNATIC.

YOU PROBABLY SAW THIS VISIT AS A CHANCE FOR A NEW BEGINNING.



BUT HERE'S THE COLD, HARD TRUTH, BATS...

I DON'T HATE YOU 'CAUSE I'M CRAZY...



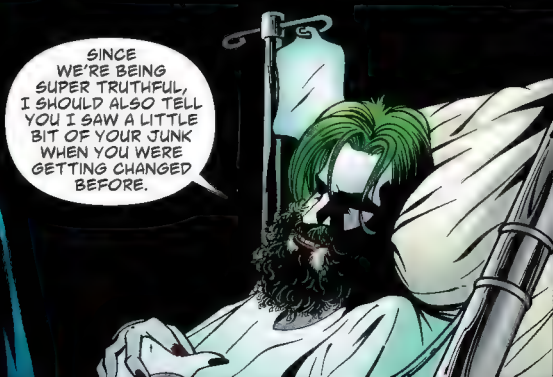
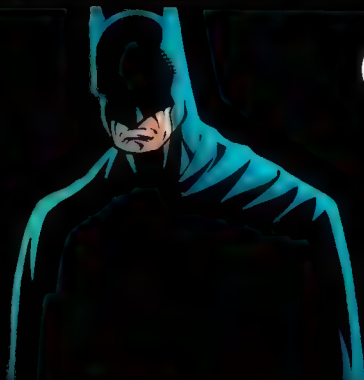
I'M CRAZY 'CAUSE I HATE YOU.



AND YOUR DEATH--PREFERABLY, BUT NOT NECESSARILY, BY MY HAND--WILL MEAN AN END TO MY REIGN OF TERROR IN GOTHAM.

WHEN YOU'RE GONE, I'LL STOP HURTING PEOPLE I DON'T KNOW. I'LL STOP WITH THE MAYHEM AND MURDER.

I'LL LOCK MYSELF UP IN A HOSPITAL AND RUN OUT MY CLOCK STARING AT THE WALLS, HOPPED UP ON PREMIUM GRADE PHARMACEUTICALS THAT LEAVE ME SO VIRTUALLY LOBOTOMIZED, THEY'LL HAVE TO CATHETERIZE AND COLOSTOMIZE MY HOLES TO KEEP ME FROM BECOMING A NONSTOP SELF-PISSING AND POOPING MESS.



THE CAVE...

WELL, I CAN'T SAY I'M SURPRISED BY WHAT THE JOKER SAID, MASTER BRUCE...

IT'S LITTLE WONDER HE CAUGHT THAT GLIMPSE, CONSIDERING YOU WEAR YOUR BRIEFS ON THE OUTSIDE OF YOUR CLOTHES.

FUNNY.

WELL, I'VE ALWAYS DREAMED OF BECOMING A NIGHTCLUB COMIC.

SO DID HE.

THE CLOWN'S NOT GONNA STOP 'TIL ONE OF US IS DEAD.

CERTAINLY THIS COMES AS NO SHOCK, MASTER BRUCE.

IT'S JUST... I HELD HIS LIFE IN MY HANDS. GORDON URGED ME TO LET THE JOKER BLEED OUT.

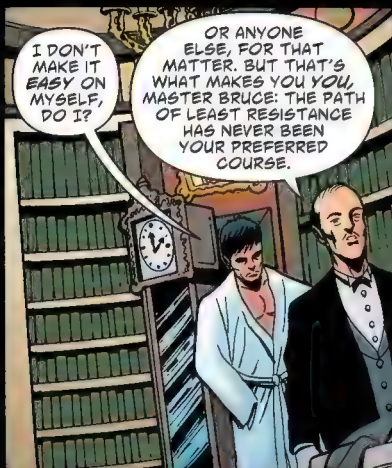
FROM WHAT HE TOLD ME TONIGHT, THAT WOULD'VE GIVEN HIM PEACE.



IF YOU
DON'T MIND
ME SAYING, SIR---
YOU CODDLE
THAT ONE
TOO MUCH.

BUT THEN,
YOU CODDLE ALL
OF THEM. I SOMETIMES
WONDER, MASTER BRUCE,
WHAT YOU'D DO WITH
YOURSELF IF ALL THE
COSTUMED KOOKS AND
OVERGROWN CHILDREN
SUDDENLY OPTED
FOR LAW-ABIDING
LIVES.

JAYWALKERS
BEWARE!
THE BATMAN
STRIKES!



I DON'T
MAKE IT
EASY ON
MYSELF,
DO I?

OR ANYONE
ELSE, FOR THAT
MATTER. BUT THAT'S
WHAT MAKES YOU YOU,
MASTER BRUCE: THE PATH
OF LEAST RESISTANCE
HAS NEVER BEEN
YOUR PREFERRED
COURSE.



STILL NO SIGN OF THE
OTHER FELLOW, THEN?
THE UPSTANDING CITIZEN
WITH THE PENDANT FOR
ONOMATOPOEIA?

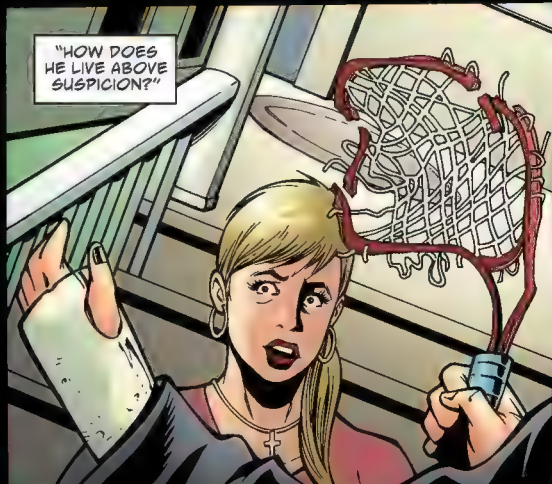
NONE.

IT FOLLOWS
THE PATTERN
OF HIS STAR CITY
ACTIVITIES FROM A
FEW YEARS BACK: HE
GOES AFTER A BIG
GUN, FAILS, THEN
SHRINKS BACK
INTO THE DARKNESS.



EVEN
MONSTERS
NEED THEIR
REST, I
SUPPOSE.

I JUST
WISH I
KNEW MORE
ABOUT
HIM...





"DOES HE SPEND EVERY WAKING HOUR PLOTTING HIS NEXT KILL, OR DOES HE HAVE A LIFE OUTSIDE OF DEATH?"



"HOW DOES HE RECONCILE WHAT HE DOES TO WHO HE IS?"



"AND WHEN HE'S ALONE WITH HIS THOUGHTS..."



"IS HE HONEST WITH HIMSELF?"



"DOES HE KNOW THERE'S NO PLACE HE CAN HIDE FROM HIMSELF?"



"DOES HE KNOW THERE'S NO PLACE HE CAN HIDE FROM JUSTICE?"

Gotham City News

BATMAN NABS RIDDLER

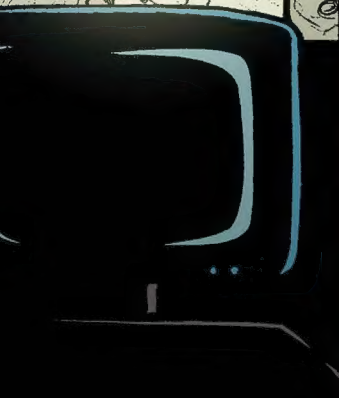
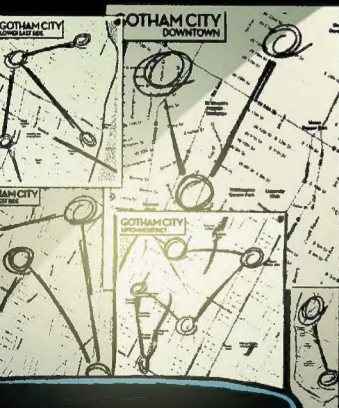


From Rags to Riches - Local Man Wins Lotto

Dark Knight Triumphant

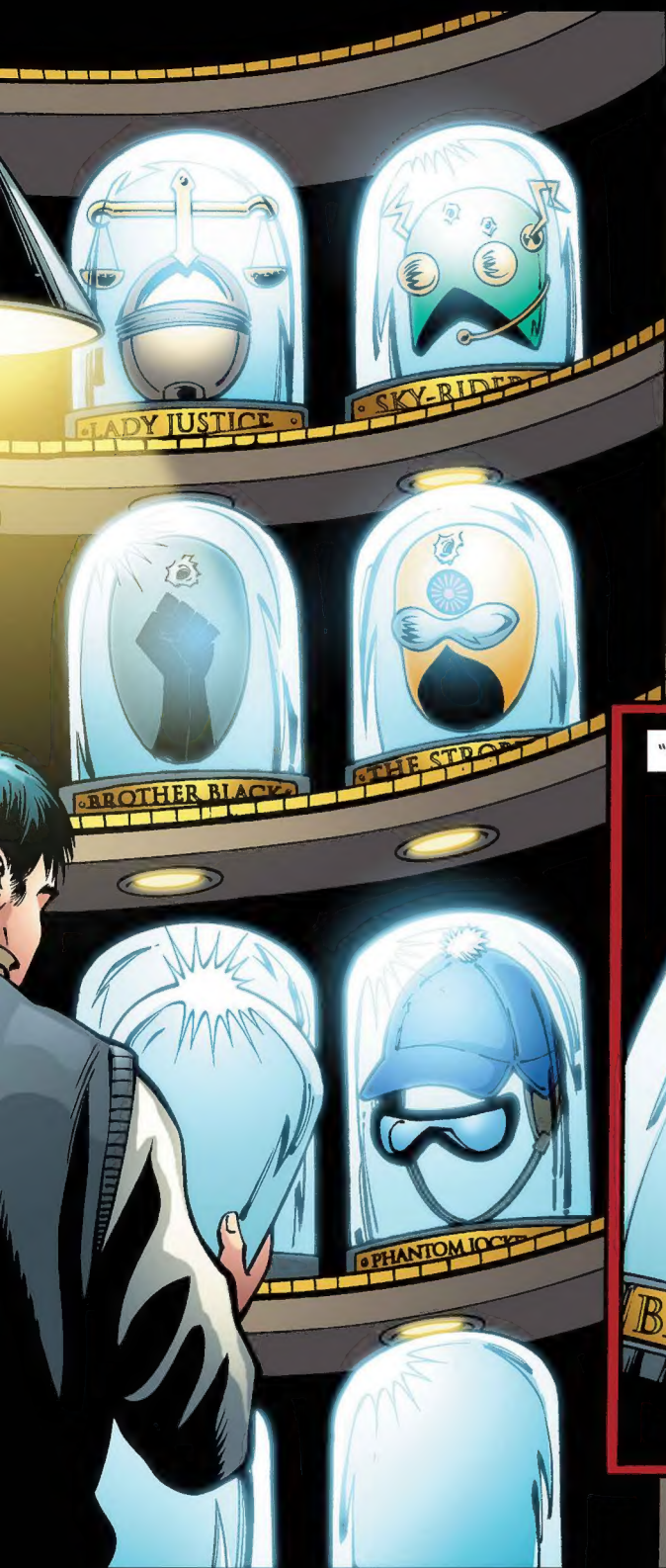
BATMAN?!?

Man Halts Penguin Crime Spree



"DOES HE KNOW
THERE'S NO PLACE
HE CAN HIDE..."





THE END



FROM THE DIRECTOR OF **CLERKS** AND **CHASING AMY**

“Entertaining” — VARIETY

“[Smith’s writing] is every bit as witty as his movies.” —IGN

BRING THE NOISE

Gotham City is a war zone — but it’s not the one-man battle the Batman envisioned when he started his crusade against crime.

An entire rogues gallery of disturbed, disfigured masterminds and mass murderers has developed around the Dark Knight. And when they come into conflict, the crossfire is deafening.

No one embodies this onslaught better than the Joker. The Clown Prince of Crime is on a rampage, determined to unseat a pretender to his bloody throne—and Batman is just as determined to put him down.

But a mysterious new player has entered the game, a masked killer intent on using this chaos and confusion to his advantage. The only sound he makes is the noise of his lethal attacks. And in the cacophony of Gotham City, Batman may not hear him coming until it’s too late...



Photo by Kevin Smith

Kevin Smith is the award-winning writer/director/producer of *Clerks*, *Chasing Amy*, *Zack and Miri Make a Porno* and other films. He also writes comic books (GREEN ARROW: QUIVER, *Daredevil*).

dccomics.com

